History Text & Officialdom [illegible] Cauvery ● Zionis.

Mainstream

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POLITICAL NOTEBOOK

New Year G[illegible]

The Union Government's decision to raise the issue prices of wheat .nd rice in the public distribution ystem (PDS) by 20 per cent and 23 to :0 per cent respectively has come in he wake of a steep hike in the prices of everal essential commodities. This is he government's New Year gift to the eople.

Such a development once again akes a mockery of the Congress-I's re-election promise to roll back prices ıthin hundred days of assuming office he government's contention is that y this exercise the Rs 2500 crore expenıture on foodgrain subsidy through ae PDS would be offset by 50 per cent ı the 1991-92 budget. The fact is that ontrary to the official claims, this ove would have only a marginal apact on the estimated Rs 7800 crore udgetary deficit. What is of supreme portance is that the step would adverely affect a vast number of the vulnerble segments of our people dependent ı the PDS for their s[illegible]nce in the idst of grinding po[illegible]

The very purpose of the New Year ive by the Centre and the States to vamp and strengthen the PDS by uing 2.4 million additional new ration rds in the backward areas will be feated by this latest government ecision. No doubt this has been taken ıder pressure from the World Bank/ IF. It is common knowledge that the Bank-Fu[illegible]icials had quite forcefully urged t[illegible]rnment of India to have the exp[illegible]re on the PDS substantially [illegible]ed as part of the general line of c[illegible] on subsidies.

In any [illegible]lation of the Bank-Fund the tee[illegible] millions of the country concerned have little relevance. They are to be kept outside the planning process.

India with its steadfast commitment to the cause of ushering in an egalitarian society cannot pursue such a course. That is precisely why the latest price hike in the PDS scheme deserves to be unequivocally opposed. Not only does it run counter to the government's professed objective of extending succour to the poorest of the poor, it will in effect further fuel inflation which is running at 13 per cent, a figure that was beyond expectation during the presentation of the budget.

Structural adjustment should not lead to abandonment of basic principles. Hence the Bank-Fund prescription needs to be rejected outright. Instead what is essential is to evolve a fresh economic strategy based on the *swadeshi* spirit for the upliftment of the weakest components of the Indian populace. Reliance on the alien Fund-Bank approach cannot take us far in the light of the Latin American experience.

December 31, 1991 *S.C.*

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[illegible]rse than the Disease

N.C.

Distortions and pre[illegible] abou[illegible] our school textbooks. These [illegible] to occa[illegible]nal outcry which has the desired [illegible].

There have been co[illegible]ersies o[illegible]rescribed textbooks. These have [illegible]e parti[illegible]y frequent as polarisation in pol[illegible] along c[illegible]nal lines have become sharper. [illegible]y be reca[illegible]d that when the Janata Governm[illegible]me to power in 1977, there were sharp atta[illegible]articularly by the then Jana Sangh, against [illegible] textbooks published by the NCERT on the gr[illegible]hat these had a Marxist bias. There was a ful[illegible] acrimony over a project on Indian history pre[illegible]d by the Indian Council of Historical Research (I[illegible]R) and this got entwined in a tussle for the control of the ICHR itself. The National Integration Council appointed a sub-committee to scrutinise history textbooks prescribed for schools: this had a marginal impact insofar as some of the more glaring inaccuracies were rectified.

In the last two years the question of history education itself has virtually become part of the wider political issue, with its focus on the high-tension politics of the Babri mosque-Ram Janmabhoomi. This turned out to be the key issue in the 1990 politics in which the National Front Government lost the support of the BJP which, with its President on the Ram *rath yatra*, clashed with Mulayam Singh's police attack in Ayodhya.

Since then the BJP version of the early history of India has got wide currency as the party made striking headway by capturing the governments in four Hindi States—UP, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh—after the 1991 poll. Since education is a State subject, it is possible that the reorientation of school textbooks to be prescribed in these four State is likely to reflect its point of view.

It is in this background that the Minister for Human Resources Development announced in Parliament's last session the Union Government's the decision to set up a National Advisory Committee composed of eminent historians, headed by Dr S. Gopal, to deal with the contemporary history of India since independence. As soon as the Committee's personnel came out in the press, some of them disowned the idea and have withdrawn from t Committee, though Dr Gopal has valiantly trie defend the project and denied that it is managed the government.

◆

IT is obvious Arjun Singh's announcement of t project is part of the campaign against the BJP which the Congress, at least the bulk of it, interested. No doubt to combat communalism the plane of education and culture it would necessary to project a secular approach to the pa As a political leder opposed to the BJP, it is obvi that he is keen on roping in some emine intellectuals in a bid to ward off the BJP inroad the intellectual and ideological plane.

At the same time one has to guard agai prescribing remedies worse than the disease. A book on Indian history written on the initiative the government—even if it keeps its word not change a line—will appear in the eyes of the pub as being pro-government, and therefore oneside What is surprising in this entire controversy that neither the government nor the historia agreeing to take up the government-sponso project seem to realise how sensitive is the subj itself.

Interpreting history at the behest of a politi establishment in power is a long-standing mala Its blatant manifestation is to be seen in t totalitarian systems under which individuals political leaders, eminent intellectuals, gr military commanders among others—have b made non-persons or fiercly reviled, and in m cases rehabilitated with the change of regim History books written on the initiative of government will have limited relevance—o limited—for future generation of scholars providing an insight into the line of thinking c particular establishment. With all the efforts our distinguished authors, they will hardly comma the respect of being objective.

A simplistic counter-question is being posed

(Continued on page

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Teaching of History and Political Control

DHARMA KUMAR

Arjun Singh has announced in Parliament that he is setting up a National Advisory Committee to consider (and perhaps arrange for the writing of) "the contemporary history of post-independence India". The terms of reference of this Committee are unclear but apparently it is also to prepare curricula for school and university education. This seemingly innocuous announcement reinforces two very dangerous current tendencies.

The first is to use Indian history as a political resource. Politicans whip up public passions by dwelling on past injustices, real or imaginary; in a country as old as ours no group need be short of grievances. Now that "historical injustice" establishes a claim to state benefits, the demand for the manufacture of usable history is increasing.

There are other motives at work such as individual or group vanity, guilt and the desire to efface inconvenient facts. One can see them all at work in the States. In Maharashtra, one historian was threatened with dismissal for not being sufficiently adulatory of Shivaji, and in Gujarat, another is in trouble for trying to establish facts about Swaminarayan. Conditions are probably much worse in other States—at least there is organised protest in western India.

Some historians apparently feel they can counter the politics they dislike by using the government themselves, a dangerous illusion. The thought that the "objective and impartial" history of Modern India can be determined by a few academics and ultimately by MPs is frightening, besides being comic. On the contrary, historians who care for the health of their subject should keep politicans out of history education.

This is particularly important now, when the old political order has broken down, and politicians are casting about for new weapons. This does not mean that the historian should abstain from political action himself, or even from using historical arguments in political discourse. But it is an argument against joining the official establishment and helping to impose an official history in any guise, and against allowing politicians and bureaucrats to tell historians what to write and history teachers what to teach. Nor should historians fool themselves—choosing the historians to do these tasks is a very effective form of control.

The social sciences and history are particularly vulnerable to political interference, but other subjects can suffer too. True, we are unlikely to have a screaming match on topology in Parliament, but the sciences too are threatened by central control.

Today official boidies at the Centre and in the States prescribe curricula and commission textbooks. Since our examinations test only rote learning, the government powers of thought control are reinforced. It is a great comfort to recall that decades of Marxist-Leninist teaching in Eastern Europe had little effect, but what a waste of our children's time and of the nation's money! And much of the money flows into private pockets—it is rumoured that the author of an officially prescribed school text can make Rs 6 lakhs a year.

Politics and corruption apart, the centralised control of textbooks and curricula greatly harms the quality of teaching. The freedom to design curricula and to choose and write texts is vital to good teaching. People say to me: "That is all very well for the Delhi School of Economics, but what about the teacher in Moradabad?" This patronising attitude is part of the problem. Teachers in small places need access to libraries and collegaues in larger institutions, who will help with reading lists and so forth; they do not need to be told exactly what to teach. They also need a choice between different textbooks and there are thousands of teachers and others who can write sound and interesting textbooks.

Of course, incomplete and tendentious books will also be produced (typically the Advisory Committee does not include a single school teacher). But the remedy is not to establish an official monopoly but to expose error and prejudice, and support those who do so, whatever their politics. Nor should these exposes be confined to academic journals. Parents should read their children's textbooks and protest loudly when they are bad and journalists should publicise the errors and rank-nonsense that are now officially prescribed.

Is it true, that the Tamil Nadu schoolchildren learn that Tamil is a cure for leprosy, as I have been told, or was it TB? ■

The author is a Professor of Economic History at the Delhi School of Economics.

(Courtesy: *Indian Express*)

In the light of the controversy over the sharing of Cauvery waters by Karnataka and Tamil Nadu we publish the following two pieces. The second one contains excerpts from the speech the Congress-I MP from Tamil Nadu, Mani Shankar Aiyar, had delivered in the Lok Sabha on December 13, 1991.

—Editor

Storm over Cauvery

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

The fall-out of the Cauvery water dispute between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu has a very serious lesson for Indian democracy. It brings out the dangerous potentialities for national disintegration.

If one were to go by the average reaction of citizens in other parts of the country, particularly in our northern States, one gets the impression as if some squabble has been going on between two neighbours about sharing the waters of a common river, and that such things come up and then go down in different parts of the country from time to time, and that's nothing to worry about. This attitude would lead to dangerous complacency, because this particular dispute as it has been allowed to snowball, needs to be examined against the background of the climate of crisis that pervades all over the country today.

One need not have to go through the entire history of the Cauvery water dispute to focus on the dimension of the present explosive situation. The Tribunal entrusted with the responsibility to decide on the respective claims of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu to the waters of the Cauvery was set up by the Government of India with the consent of the two State Governments concerned. The obvious implication of this is that both the governments had agreed to abide by the Tribunal's award when it would finally come. Pending its final decision, the Tribunal has given an interim award, which by law and common sense is binding on both the State Governments. Tamil Nadu accepted it, but the Karnataka Government not only protested against it, it promptly issued an ordinance virtually nullifying it, an irresponsible move which was struck down by the Supreme Court.

At this stage instead of calling for calm acceptance of the interim award of the Tribunal, the Karnataka Government with Chief Minister Bangarappa in the lead took the dispute to the streets. A Statewide bandh was called by the State Government itself to demonstrate its protest against the Union Government's gazetting of the Tribunal's interim order—a routine step which, if not done, would have been tantamount to defying a judicial authority. During the bandh itself there was largescale violence which spread fast in the next few days. What was officially made out to be a protest move against the Centre has actually turned into full-blast pogrom—killing, arson and looting—against the Tamil-speaking minority pockets, with a substantial number of them fleeing in panic across the border into Tamil Nadu. Where the news of such anti-Tamil pogrom has inflamed passions, and Chief Minister Jayalalitha has almost hinted that her government would not be in a position to protect the Kannadigas in Tamil Nadu. In other words, reprisal and counter-reprisal are openly being talked about by people in authority, that is, the very people who are bound by the constitutional obligation to protect the minorities—whether communal or linguistic—within their own States.

◆

WHAT are the implications of the ghastly turn in the Cauvery water dispute? For one thing, the provocative postures have been initiated at the instance of the Karnataka Government which is manned by a party that is ruling at the Centre, and this party claims, both in the season of elections and out of it, that it alone is the national-level party while its opponents are subject to regional pulls. In reality, the record of the Karnataka Government is thoroughly chauvinistic. Had Karnataka today been under a non-Congress Government there is little doubt that the Centre would have threatened it with President's Rule.

Secondly, it is an open secret in Bangalore that Bangarappa is exploiting the Cauvery water dispute to whip up passions to ensure his own survival as the Chief Minister. His position within his own party is tenuous, and he wants to reinforce his position by presenting himself as having mass public support so that he could not be removed. In reality, he would have by now lost his Chief Ministership had there been democratic functioning within the Congress party.

Thirdly, the rabble rousing in Karnataka by people in office has the danger of being taken up by its neighbours, and thereby a virtual civil war situation may emerge which would be beyond the control of any authority. There is no move whatsoever even at the party level to bring about a normal approach to the issue in dispute. Rather, the rejection of the Tribunal's interim order by the Karnataka Government, had split the Congress party in Tamil Nadu, leading to the resignation of its leader from the Union Government.

Since then there is no sign of a return to a common sense approach to the issue on either side. Those who point to communal vote-banks of different political parties would find in the Cauvery dispute the emergence of blatant regional chauvinism as an equally pernicious vote-bank.

Fourthly, the Cauvery water dispute has brought to the forefront the paralysed state of affairs at the Centre. It needs to be noted that the Prime Minister of the country happens to be the President of the Congress party. While it is a welcome change from the previous dispensation in which Chief Ministers were appointed or sacked on the *fatwa* from the supremo of the party—in fact, Bangarappa got to that seat by one such fiat—it is ridiculous and dangerous if the high command of the party practises passivity to the point of total unpresence. Throughout the escalation of this crisis there is no palpable sign of any intervention on the part of the central leadership of the Congress party. Non-intervention in the present critical context is as bad as conniving at a throughly unscrupulous action hurting the nation's interest. Not a very shining example of upholding national integration.

Lastly, the Cauvery dispute brings out the need for a hard look at our constitutional structure. Interminable disputes between States over the sharing of river waters have marked the four decades of the functioning of our Constitution. Can't certain mandatory ground rules be enforced in such disputes? In this context, certain proposals made by Rajiv Gandhi when he was the Prime Minister, could perhaps be gainfully pursued.

Very often such a subject of common concern is recklessly exploited by the pressures of parties in power in one State or other, and the Centre is often seen in the public eye as being a party to such squabbles. The classic case of Haryana and Punjab in dispute over the sharing of water has contributed substantially to the Punjab crisis which has today ended up in armed militancy. A judicious approach to this vexed question accompanied by its strict adherence in every case has to be part of our endeavour towards genuine federalism in our Constitution.

We have the Inter-State Council. Why can't such disputes be tackled by such a body and settled finally and irrevocably, with every State authority pledging to abide by its verdict? As the Haryana-Punjab dispute as also the current one between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu brings out, these are no longer a tug-of-war item between two neighbouring States. The poison that is being spread today is no longer a matter of mere bilateral concern between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. It threatens to pollute the entire democratic fabric of our republic. ■

Plea for a National Water Policy

MANI SHANKAR AIYAR

Here on the floor of the House, in the month of July, I charged the Government of India with conniving with the Government of Karnataka. Today I wish, in all humility, to withdraw that charge.

In gazetting the Interim Order of the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal, the Government of India has vindicated the honour of this Parliament. It was Parliament which passed the Inter-State Water Disputes Act.

In gazetting this Order, the Government of India has vindicated the honour of the Constitution because the Constitution provides that all State Governments must obey the law of the land.

In gazetting the Interim Order of the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal, the Government of India has not provided water to Tamil Nadu, nor denied water to Karnataka; the Government of India has merely rendered justice as the forums of justice have determined what is just and what is right.

What the Government of India has done by gazetting the Order of the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal is to vindicate the honour of the democratic institutions of this country.

I appeal to the Government of Karnataka not to waste its time politicising this issue. I appeal to the Government of Karnataka to think carefully about what its interests are, what the issues involved are, and to go before the Tribunal and argue its case, just as, I am sure, the Government Tamil Nadu will continue arguing its case before the Tribunal. It is for the Tribunal to make a determination about what is right and what is just.

At no point has any honest, decent or good Tamilian attempted to stop the right of Karnataka to have recourse to other legal measures available, whether it be placing the facts before the Tribunal, whether it be a matter of going to the Supreme Court. Of course, it is the right and, furthermore, it is the duty of the Government of Karnataka to do everything possible to defend its interests. And then, even after a decision comes out of the court, it is the duty of the Government of India, equally the duty of the Government of Tamil Nadu, to see to it that our friends, our brothers, our sisters, our fellow-citizens of Karnataka are not adversely affected.

There is no interest of Tamil Nadu that will be served by harming the interests of Karnataka. There is no interest of Karnataka that will be served by harming the interests of Tamil Nadu.

I want to know how many citizens of India live in the delta, and how many citizens of India live along the rest of the course of the Cauvery. Approximately three times more Indian citizens live in the delta than along the rest of the course of the Cauvery.

The second thing I want to ask is about the food that the Cauvery delta produces, the other agricultural produce that the Cauvery delta produces: where does it go to? Does it go to Sri Lanka? Does it go to Pakistan? Is it all consumed in Tamil Nadu? It is our contribution to the granary of India. We are not talking about food production in Tamil Nadu or food production in Karnataka. We are talking about food production in India and the rice bowl of India is the Cauvery delta.

In the old district of Thanjavur alone, the density of population is so great, the dependence of people on agriculture is so great, that in just that one district there are no less than three parliamentary constitutencies plus one segment of a fourth parliamentary constituency. That is the extent to which not the people of the Cauvery delta, not the people of Tamil Nadu, but the people of India—first and foremost, the people of India—depend upon that water.

V. Dhananjaya Kumar (BJP, Mangalore): The population in the Cauvary basin in Karnataka is 1.5 crores, nearly one-half of the total population of Karnataka.

Mani Shankar Aiyar: I have no desire whatsoever to harm any of their interests. I believe that it is entirely possible, while the Tribunal is sorting out the judical issues involved and while the Prime Minister is engaged in protecting the interests of the people of Karnataka and the people of Tamil Nadu by holding these talks between the two Chief Ministers, I believe it is possible for men of goodwill, men of intelligence and people of experience like Dhananjaya Kumar and H.D. Devegowda to get-together to see what we can do to make the best of the present situation. Here, I have the following suggestions to make:

First, I would plead with the Government of India to ask the Tribunal to expedite its final award, so that this anguished issue can be put behind us as quickly as possible.

Second, I would plead with the Government of India to set up a Cauvery Delta Rehabilitation Authority immediately so that by making effective use of the water that is available to us under the interim award, we are able to put into practice, in the Cauvery delta, systems of water conservation and systems of agriculture practice which will make the farmers of my constituency match up to the reality that no longer are we going to get abundant water in the Cauvery basin: we are going to get a limited but assured supply.

Third, I would plead with the Minister of Water Resources to avail of this opportunity to realise the dream that Rajivji had placed before the National Development Council, which was to have a National Water Policy. Instead of having this kind of debate, which is just creating ill-will, if we have a National Water Policy, if we realise that the water is a national resource, if we realise that the Cauvery does not belong to Kerala or to Karnataka or to Tamil Nadu or to Pondicherry, but that the Cauvery belongs to India, and it is India which is going to benefit from a rational use of the Cauvery waters, then I think this kind of river water dispute will at least be diminished, if not toally eliminated.

Then, I have only two more points to make. I would plead with the Minister of Water Resources to start work very urgently and very quickly on linking the rivers of peninsular India through the Mahanadi to the Godavari, to the Krishna, to the Pennar and to the Cauvery. If we were to link these, there would be a garland of prosperity in peninsular India. Then, it will not matter where a river has started and where it ends. All of us will have plenty of water in abundance, and the water that is now being wasted by simply flowing to the sea, will cease to flow into the sea.

Finally, and this I regard as the single most important point I wish to make in this intervention, I plead with the Government of India to recognise that Karnataka, through the Interim Award, has achieved a very, very major breakthrough.

That breakthrough is that, for the first time, the ayacut which is presently under the irrigation system of Karnataka has received legitimacy. That is a very major breakthrough. Now that it has achieved that legitimacy, I would plead with the Government of India to extend the maximum possible assistance to Karnataka in the coming Eighth Five Year Plan to be able to make the very best use of the water supply that is with Karnataka as well as the irrigation system they have already built up, and to so modernise it and to so utilise it that agriculture in Karnataka flourishes in the thousands of years to come as it has flourished in my delta in the thousands of years that have gone by. ■

Zionism is Definitely a Form of Racism

HARI SHARAN CHHABRA

Now that the UN General Assembly, under pressure from the United States, has revoked its 16 year old resolution equating Zionism with racism, one would believe that the time has come when the South African Government could persuade Washington in getting repealed the 1967 resolution of the General Assembly which described apartheid as a "crime against humanity".

But what did the November 10, 1975 General Assembly resolution on Zionism say? It simply said:

> Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination.

This would lead one to briefly discuss the meaning of the terms racism and racial discrimination.

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RACISM has been variously described as "hatred or intolerance of another race or other races", "a doctrine that human abilities are determined by race" and "belief in the superiority of a particular race".

Racial discrimination is defined by the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, duly endorsed by the UN General Assembly in 1965, in the following words:

> .... the term racial discrimination shall mean any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent or national and ethnic origin, which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, employment or exercise on an equal footing of human rights and fundamental freedoms...

In this regard Zionist history and origin carry many seeds of racism and racial discrimination. One can quote dozens of Zionist leaders who employ racist language. An early Zionist, Moses Hess, in his book *Rome and Jerusalem* observes:

> Every Jew has the making of a Messiah, every Jewess that of a Mater Dolorosa... only the Jews could rise to the height on which life and death seem equal... the great teachers of the knowledge of God were always Jews.

Another early Zionist, Norden arrogantly claimed that Jews were "more industrious and abler than the average European, not to mention the moribund Asiatic and African". Another chauvinist Jew wrote: "Jews are the aristocracy of history."

The founder of the World Zionist Organisation, Theodor Hezel, asserts:

> Our race is more efficient in everything than most other peoples of the earth.

If all this is not racism, what is it?

The oft-quoted correspondence between Mahatma Gandhi and the Zionist philosopher, Martin Buber, is quite revealing on the "superior race" theory of the Jews. When Gandhiji observed that the Zionists were looking for a sanction in the Bible for the demand for a Jewish state in Palestine, Buber shot back:

> ... the Bible tells us, and our innermost knowledge testifies to it, that once more than three thousand years ago our entry into this land (i.e., Palestine) took place with the consciousness of a mission from above to set up a just way of life through the generations of our people... No other nation has ever been faced at the beginning of its career with such mission. Here is something from which there is no forgetting and from which there is no release. (Martin Buber, *Israel and the World*, New York, 1963, p. 229)

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THE present-day Zionist leaders are even more arrogantly racists. Here is what Ben Gurion, the first Prime Minister of Israel, had to say:

> I believe in our moral and intellectual superiority, in our capacity to serve as a model for the redemption of the human race.

Israeli atrocities in occupied West Bank and Gaza smack of nothing but racism and racial discrimination. There is so much of evidence that the Jewish rulers in occupied Arab territories consider Arabs as an inferior lot of humanity.

One must not also forgot how in 1948 the Israelis hounded the Palestinians out of their homes. A cruel example of this was the massacre of Deir Yassin on April 9, 1948 in which 250 old men, women and children were savagely murdered and their mutilated corpses put on public display. The most terrifying incidents in Hulah, Ramleh and Lydda forced lakhs of Palestinians to flee from their homes. This is all racially discriminatory.

The Jewish settlements on Arab territories have so much of racist content. So is the eviction of the Palestinians from the homelands during and after

(Continued on page 13)

Of Doctors and Death Penalty

VIMAL BALASUBRAHMANYAN

The debate on whether or not capital punishment violates human rights seems to be in the news again. Side by side, there has also emerged the argument that hanging is a barbaric method of execution and that the state should introduce a more humane method of carrying out the death penalty. In June 1991, a petition filed in the Supreme Court, by a lawyer, called for abolition of hanging and adoption of a less cruel form of execution, such as cyanide injection.

In the first place, juxtaposition of phrases like 'humane' and 'execution' seems to be a contradiction in terms. Further, the suggested so-called humane method of execution is going to require the active participation of health professionals who will be the instruments for administering the injection. The views of health professionals on human rights in general and death penalty in particular are therefore worth examining in this revived debate on capital punishment.

The June/July 1990 issue of the *Medico Friends Circle Bulletin* was entirely devoted to the theme of health professionals and human rights. The section on death penalty points out that in 1969 the American Psychiatric Association had submitted to the US Senate its resolution condemning the death penalty. A proposal to introduce 'lethal injection' as a method of execution led the American Medical Association to debate the ethical issues involved during the late 70s. And in 1981, the World Medical Assembly declared that it was unethical for doctors to participate in death penalty. In 1988, Amnesty International (which has consistently campaigned for the abolition of death penalty) widened its endorsement of the WMA declaration to cover all health professionals, not just doctors.

According to Amnesty's 1989 report, *When the State Kills*, medical bodies in over 20 countries are now on record as opposing the involvement of doctors in carrying out executions.

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RELATED to this is the broader question of health professionals being forced to carry out various other kinds of human rights abuses. For example, a report in the *Listener* (September 13, 1990) states that over 300 military and police doctors have played an active role in torture during the 70s and 80s in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay.

Ironically, it is because of more intensive vigilance by human rights groups that medical involvement in torture has greatly increased in recent years. Ruling authorities now feel the need to devise more and more 'sophisticated' forms of torture—for example, methods which will leave behind no visible physical evidence of ill-treatment. Health professionals are therefore enlisted to 'administer, monitor and regulate' the newer forms of torture. And victims have reported that often the role of doctors was to simply keep them alive for continued suffering.

Obviously it is very important for professional medical bodies to take a stand on these emerging new dimensions of torture and human rights as a whole. The Tokyo declaration of the Word Medical Assembly (1975) and the UN's Principles of Ethics for Prison Health Personnel (1982) are examples of worthy initiatives, but clearly they need to be adopted and codified by the official guardians of medical ethics in individual countries.

For example, the British Medical Association has been active on this issue and its 1986 report on medical involvement in torture had underlined "erosion of professional independence" as the major reason why doctors in the security forces are increasingly involved in carrying out torture. Because of the ambivalence of professional ethical bodies, doctors involved in human rights abuses are able to claim that they were "only obeying orders".

In our own country, none of the august medical organisations have taken a stand on any of the socio-ethical dimensions of health and medicine which have been debated in recent years. In fact individual doctors who have courageously raised their voice on social issues have actually been victimised by hospital authorities.

That an activist group like the MFC feels deeply committed to the question of doctors and human rights is not surprising. That none of the Establishment medical bodies have so far raised it is also not surprising. ■

Planning versus Market

J.D. SETHI

Right from the beginning of planning in India there has been an ongoing and somewhat farcical debate about (a) plan versus market; (b) public sector versus private sector; and (c) regulation versus liberalisation. On the whole the performance of every category has been below expectation and even perverse in some cases because it covered up the real political power struggle. Yet the focus remains on battered old issues and battles conducted from old bunkers as if the generals are discussing strategies of today and tomorrow on the principles of yesterday's wars.

It is even more farcical that liberalisation which began eleven years ago and got a shot in the arm under compulsions of terrifying fiscal and balance of payment crisis is not yet half way through. The irony is that only an unmitigating crisis forced the Indian Government to accelerate reforms.

There has been a terrible mix-up of issues. That is why there is no clarity yet. What were presented as three alternative pairs for making choices were put forth and are still treated as equivalent of one another. Planning versus market was equated with public versus private sector on the one hand and with regulation versus liberalisation on the other. Although related to one another the alternatives involved in each of the three pairs are distinct. Apart from this mix-up one other reason for the protraction of the debate and slow decision-making has been politics taking precedence over economics. The New Economic Policy precisely repeats the same mistake of not making clear distinctions where distinctions are required.

The objective of this article is to straighten out some of the aforementioned issues while keeping a broad focus on the role of the market in terms of its own autonomous role as well as in relationship with other issues.

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FROM the ouset of the Second Five Year Plan the debate was seen as a choice between alternatives: between the market system and a system of command and fulfilment. Neither planning nor market was clearly interpreted. There was a consensus in favour of planning but there was no clarity whatsoever in defining the role of market.

The author, a noted economist, is a former member of the Planning Commission.

For two hundred years economic theory grappled with the meaning of the role of market both in political and economic terms. In economics, market was viewed as a coordinating system; the coordinator being some invisible hand and utility maximisers. Since there was no system of complete free competition, the mediating role of the non-market agencies, particularly the state, in a limited fashion, was brought in to remove the market imperfection on the one hand and to correct the ravages of capitalism which rested on market principles. The compromise left many issues unresolved. The problem as to whether the coordinating agency violates or corrects the market price is deeply controversial.

The second important aspect of the market was more sophisticated. Market was considered as a democratic value in itself because it corresponded to the value of utility, the maximisation of the consumers' choices which when combined with the principles of liberal democracy, ensured the self-fulfilment of man. However, since the principle of diminishing marginal utility, through its sheer logic, implied a perfectly equal distribution of wealth and income, the principle was modified in the name of economic rationality, productivity and technological development. Inequalities of income and wealth were accepted within the market mechanism on the one hand, and liberal democracy on the other. The ravages of capitalism based on market principles were to be corrected by the welfare state. The developed world settled on democracy, welfare state and state mediation as accompaniments of the market.

Third, the market mechanism found a powerful support in its role as an efficiency promoting device. The enormous success of the market mechanism against the non-market system gave it a big boost so much so that it has now become the guiding principle for change in the communist system in the Eastern Europe. The planning system of command economy got discredited all over the world on grounds of efficiency as well as on the rationale that it could not bring about a better allocation of resources than the market.

Instead we opted for prejudices, axioms and the trial and error method. Planning was given the role which the market assumedly could not perform. It was argued that the shortage of savings and the stock of capital which was unfavourable to manpower could be achieved through planning. Unfortunately planning was equated with the state, including the fiscal system and the public sector. This was a bad calculation as the public sector contributions to savings over four decades has become negative notwithstanding billions of rupees invested in it and budgetary surpluses turned into deficits.

Another reason behind planning was the need for structural changes without which the market could not bring about and without which even the market could not function efficiently. The market system would not succeed without the creation of the institutional structure such as financial institutions which require state intervention and promotion. Structural deficiencies were most pronounced in the infrastructure such as transport, education, communication. These sectors could not be easily handled by the market on proven grounds of finance, management, technology, etc. It can be legitimately claimed that this very role of planning, namely, the building up of the infrastructure has been largely achieved.

To ensure that the new industrial base was not destroyed by import of superior and relatively less costly products and to ensure also that adequate resources were channelled into investment of priority sectors which were chosen to build that base, an enormous and complicated set of regulations, controls, licensing quotas as well as discretionary fiscal and monetary policies and mechanisms were piled up one upon another over many years. Even those who insisted upon giving the market its proper role for its rationalisation and optimisation qualities agreed that some controls were necessary precisely to make the market perform its function. But the lines of distinction were not drawn.

Industrialisation which required setting up of the large scale capital goods sectors could not be taken up by the private sector as it did not have the resources. Besides, it was thought prudent to leave this critical sector with the state till such time as it could be safely handed over to the market. But this sector was allowed to violate commercial principles and thus showed continued losses. It is doubtful if there would be any takers of losing undertakings. The proposal to disinvest twenty per cent of investment in the public sector is devoid of market principles.

For not very good reasons all the justifications for planning overloaded the public sector rather than create the mechanism for the cooperation of both the private and public sectors to satisfy market principles. Indeed the private sector was consistently denounced and the political elite created a prolonged and artificial climate of conflict. Planning became the enemy of the private sector and indirectly of the market forces instead of becoming partners. Failures have been enormous and costly. The public sector has ceased to save; it has become inefficient; its growth rate has been slowed down; its capital output ratio is so high that no economic principle can justify it, and so on.

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IT became a matter of faith than logic that planning the public sector would be instrumental for self-reliance whereas the private sector would have the tendency to depend on external resources and advanced technology. The biggest failure of Indian planning has been in the defeat of this very belief. Public sector undertakings have remained more dependent on foreign resources and technology. In fact no public sector project has been established in India which did not have large external components. The public sector undertakings do not even coordinate with one another let alone with the private sector undertakings and prefer to rely on outside help. In this the role of the international agencies like the World Bank had been very critical. All the bilateral and multilateral aid which has gone to the public sector has been tied to the import of technology, raw materials, management, etc. from the donor country.

The Indian planners relied on only one distinction, that is, between the organised state economy and organised market economy and ignored the vast network of customary and informal economy. Whether the Indian planning was supposed to eliminate, improve or integrate this customary economy with either the state economy or the market economy was one of the unasked questions. The state intruded into the customary economy in many ways just as it did in the case of the market economy but it was never able to integrate the three sectors. In fact, the real dual economy of India is that the modern state economy and modern market economy stand on the one side and the rest of India on the other. The Indian planners assumed conflict only between the state and the market economies and left a customary economy out of calculations. The adjusting process became murky with illegal activities linking all the three.

The failure of planning in reducing regional disparities, both in development and benefits, has also raised the question of planning versus market. Although the economists and the Planning Commission talked a lot about multi-level planning, economy and planning power was never decentralised to conform to the model of multi-level planning. The Indian state was never ready to relinquish any power. Those who suggested some kind of freedom to market forces in areas where planning had failed were dismissed.

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THE Indian Marxists have been less than honest in ignoring the fact that Indian planning has distorted the whole market price structure in India. That Marxist economist of all seasons, Sukhamoy Chakravarty, wrote:

> Indian planning may be rightly criticised for not making sufficient use of the price-theoretic dimensions in the implementation process. But it is not permissible to draw from this observation any far-reaching conclusion regarding the replacement of 'planning' by the 'market'.

No one of India or elsewhere ever talked about replacement.

Although the Planning Commission had little to do with regulations and controls, it forced the government to reduce the role of the market, particularly by subjecting the entrepreneurs to many rules, regulations and controls in the name of achieving the plan objectives. Indeed when the plan objectives and increasing regulations diverged the market was falsely blamed. It was not realised that there has to be a limit to these regulations because beyond a point not only could they create distortions but also artificial scarcities.

The activities of the Commission led to massive concentration of power in the hands of the government and became increasingly hostile to liberalisation and decentralisation. The problem has been and remains that if the Commission continues to remain on its own beaten track either liberalisation would be reversed or it will degenerate into anarchy. If there is any institution which bears the heaviest responsibility of blurring the distinction between planning, public sector and regulations it is the Planning Commission. Finally the Commission pursued and supported such irrational centralisation on decision-making that from one plan to another not only has it generated disparities but pitch-forked the conflict between Centre and the States, too.

Most significantly, in the proportion of each Five Year Plan the Commission opted for maximum and not minimum foreign aid in order to show up a bigger and bigger plan. The same applies to the Commission's role in pushing up fiscal deficits. Instead of reducing unnecessary activities the Commission was anxious to enlarge the size of each plan, almost twice that of the previous one. Therefore, what began as a battle (unnecessary though) between planning and market degenerated into a scramble for resources for both plan and non-plan expenditure for the state sector.

The Indian Planning Commission performs many roles, some negative, others positive. Negatively, it legitimises the conflict between planning and market and also between the private and public sectors without ever reconsidering the need to shift the battle lines. More particularly, by dividing the government expenditure between plan and non-plan, the Commission set in motion a process by which no control could be exercised on the acceleration of non-plan, largely consumption, expenditure. Besides, the Commission established the tradition of annual step up of plan expenditure without even scrutinising, let alone dismantling programmes and projects, which became unnecessary, from the previous plans. People employed in the scheme in the first plan are still in position without knowing what they are doing.

Positively, the Commission performs the important function of allocating resources on the basis of agreed national priorities. However, that function too has been consistently undermined by successive Prime Ministers, particularly Rajiv Gandhi who had no hesitation in calling the Commission a pack of jokers. In fact the many decisions about major resource allocation shifted to the Prime Minister's Office. The Planning Commission always knew the cases of government's corrupt practices resulting from decisions in the PMO and from specific regulations and controls but it never dared to expose them.

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THE Nehru-Mahalonobis model of planning was put forward as an economic instrument for ushering in a socialistic pattern of society. Clearly there was something phoney and unreal about it. Even the big business, though voicing these objections, did not feel threatened by it. In one of the FICCI meetings, G.D. Birla advised businessmen to go along with Nehru. Nehru preferred to define socialism and left the field for those who proclaimed socialism from housetops also to serve the interest of Soviet foreign policy. Their infiltration in the government undermined the possibilities of open cooperation between the government and the private sector. A climate of conflict was artificially created which choked many channels of development.

But according to J.R.D. Tata, the main element that transformed the private sector's image was Jawaharlal Nehru's introduction of his kind of bureaucratic socialism. He had great regard for the Soviet system, and there was no point arguing with him.

> I remember once I told him that the public sector was badly run and it should make a profit for the country, he got angry and told me: 'Don't talk to me about that dirty word profit.'

Tata said:

> It was an economic dictatorship by the government. It involved obtaining licenses and permits. For everything you had to go to the minister or the bureaucrat.

At no time did the economists sit back and ask the question as to what constituted the Indian state which was supposed to plan and run the public sector *as against* the market economy. Even the most relevant question, namely the size of the state, was not asked. In India the state has expanded several times faster than the rate of expansion of any other sector. Whether all that was necessary for planning was never questioned until it was found that the consumption expenditure of the government came to be financed by deficits creating a terrifying fiscal crisis. More importantly, instruments of state planning, namely the bureaucrats and politicians, developed their vested interests and joined in a conspiracy to subvert planning and fleece the public sector.

The objective of reducing the concentration of economic power was falsely conceived and even more falsely implemented. The MRTP Act has in fact resulted in the slow down of industrial growth as well as massive increase in the concentration of economic power because of its restraint on entry. It is difficult to believe that any market system would have generated larger inequalities of income and wealth.

Intellectually the Marxist economists provided the proverbial fig leaf for the Nehru-Mahalanobis model. They quietly buried the infructuous debate on market socialism which distinguished Marxist economists such as Lange, Kalecki, Dickinson and other joined in and found it impractical. Gorbachev wanted to put it into practice but socialist hardliners defeated him. Had India seriously fashioned out a logically consistent and rational model of market socialism with mass mobilisation behind it and not mixed up issues, the result may have been different. But now it is a dead issue.

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THE failure of planning should not push us in the direction of singing praises for the market system and ignoring its incapacity to meet social objectives. In fact the Indian private big business operating through the market has been an integral part of the Indian state sector throught the support of financial institutions. The nationalised banks and other financial institutions controlled by the government own a large part of the private undertakings. The failure or success of one equally belongs to the other. The state economy is also a part of the private economy in the sense that the infrastructure is run as if it is on behalf of the private sector. In fact the distinction between state economy and private economy is largely false. Rules and regulations were designed to give economics and political power to a small group of people divided between the private and public sectors. The state robbed the citizens and the powerful citizens robbed the state and all this was called planning.

There is no economy in the world without a public sector or some planning indications, financial or physical. Even Singapur, the suggested model for the developing countries, invests forty per cent of total investment in the public sector. But at the same time in all successful economies, a public sector unit is either privatised or scrapped if it makes persistent losses. Scandolously losing public sector units must be privatised if new fiscal and management crises are to be averted How to handle or not to handle the public sector is not an issue of ordinary policy. Unless it is run on corporate principles, it will remain a drag on their economies and also defeat the social objective.

Even Barber Conable, the World Bank chief, in his World Development Report 1991, has said that it is the "market's friendly hand" as distinct from some invisible hand as well some form of intervention together guarantees efficiency. According to him, alongwith the market forces the government is supposed to perform the following functions: namely, faster climate of competition, making investment in infrastructure and institutions, making investment in people and integrating the given economies with the global economies.

We are not a monolithic polity or economy and yet the idea of the corporatist state has not sunk deep into the psyche of the Indian middle classes. A corporatist state is one in which the dominant plural interests are so arranged and balanced as to produce an efficient and just model. In case of India, these interests are the business, the politicians, the bureaucrats, the managers, the professionals, and the workers. This combination of elites will have to come to a proper understanding with those ruling elites who come under the category of the producing classes. A state run by these interests will have to identify interests with their interests of the nation in general.

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ONE advantage of the new industrial policy of delicensing and liberalisation is that it may lead to the break up of the nexus between the bureaucratic and the business elites. It may generate efficiency both in the private and the public sector. The competition between the state economy and the market economy may become a reality. The need for privatisation of the public sector is generally accepted because the public sector has not only moved into an areas in which it had no role to play, but also because it is losing in those very areas where there was clear justification of its operation. However, the way privatisation has been conducted may not allow the break-up of the nexus. It will be a highly tortuous process. The private sector is likely to grab as much as it can and ultimately the advantage may be distributed between the old culprits.

Without decentralisation of political power it is difficult to imagine how a market economy would function efficiently and independentally of the state monopoly sector. Neither the private sector nor the public sector is ready to decentralise. Privatisation without decentralisation will not change the situation in any significant way.

The Finance Minister has in his budget speech proposed that the country should have a second look at the largely neglected Gandhian concept of trusteeship. Ever since independence it is for the first time that someone in the government has accepted the need for experimenting with trusteeship. Whether the statement was a rhetoric or a search for a genuine alternative to both public sector and private sector exploitation should be put to test. Along with the trusteeship sector there should be a cooperative sector as well as a sector of small independent producers. Therefore, if the balance is to be achieved between planning and free enterprise, between market economy and the state economy, not only is there the need to make a shift in favour of the private sector but within the private sector new formations should be introduced.

The trusteeship sector, cooperative sector and the sector of independent producers together can act as countervailing force against both monopolies of the private and the public sector and unleash the productive activities and the capacities of the people. In such a structure, the role of the Planning Commission will be restricted and also changed qualitatively. It is futile to continue to debate on planning versus market on hackneyed old lines which flowed from the failed coup of the Nehru-Mahalonobis conspirators. ■

CHHABRA: Zionism and Racism

(Continued from page 7)

the June 1967 war. The UN Relief and Works Agency reported that the Israeli army forced a large number of Palestinians out of the West Bank by bombing the refugee camps.

A testimony of the Israeli racist policies is provided by Dr Israel Shehak and his League for Human and Civil Rights. He calls the Israeli regime as the most cruel and repressive. Its racist features are: imprisonment and torture, mass expulsion, collective punishments, dispossession through promise and deceit and the enslavement of the Palestinian population.

The case of Rabi Meir Kahane, an American Jew who came to Israel in 1971 and has ever since been propagating the cult of racist hatred against the Palestinians, needs to be noted. His solution to the "Arab problem" is: "Throw them out." No wonder he was elected to the Israeli Parliament in 1984 on a racist plank.

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THE growing cooperation between Israel and South Africa is a clear case of Zionism and racism being one and the same thing. After the 1967 war there appeared a telling editorial in *Die Berger,* the mouthpiece of the Nationalist Party, which said:

> It is in South Africa's interest that Israel is successful in containing her enemies, who are among our own most vicious enemies; and Israel would have all the world against it if the navigation route around the Cape of Good Hope should be out of operation because South Africa's control is undermined.

It was not surprising when *Die Vaterland,* another South African ruling party newspaper, wrote:

> Israel's survival in the Middle East is a fundamental part of our security. ■

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Reflections on Soviet Events

LAJPAT RAI

This article was written before the formal dismantling of the USSR following the resignation of Gorbachev from Soviet Presidentship.

—Editor

The August coup will be remembered as one of the great watersheds of history. It was a moment which defined everything and everybody—what is what and who is who. The "Gang of Eight" was united in the belief that only the iron-fisted authority would work in the Soviet Union, as it had worked in the past. The putschists were the chosen men of Gorbachev, his trusted men, who talked the Gorbachev line in public while they plotted against him in private. In seeking to save the Union through conspiracy and coercion, they have destroyed it. As someone has said:

> By planting the flag of socialism on a tank turret, they discredited it forever in the country.

In basing their intrigues upon the Communist Party Central Committee apparatus, they betrayed millions of Communists who thought they were participants in the building of a new socialist dispensation. It led to the disintegration of the traditional communist world which still could have a chance to be a world in which reason, freedom, democracy, pluralism, justice and humanism prevailed, or at least had a chance to prevail. That chance has been eliminated. What is left now in the Soviet Union, or better the Soviet disunion, are the ethnic, social and political conflicts, economic crisis, chauvinism and clashes of hundreds of special interests.

Yeltsin behaved sensibly, honourably and with great personal courage. He seems to be at his best when facing the enemy and at his worst without one. Having saved Gorbachev and the Constitution, Yeltsin turned his attention once again to demolishing them. He has supported the republican independence movements primarily as a weapon against the Centre. He seems to believe that he can put the pieces back together more advantageously by using Russia's enormous weight and the market forces as his instruments. He is not above using crude threats, such as open talk of "border adjustments", and may by doing so bring catastrophe upon every-one.

The Russian Federation is a complex ethnic fabric, containing 16 autonomous republics, five autonomous regions, and 10 national districts. Many are small but a few are large and sit on vast natural wealth. While the "Goons of August" finished off Soviet socialism or whatever was left of it, Yeltsin may end by stifling the aspirations of the Yakuts, Bashkirs, Kalmyks, Tartars and a number of others in the name of stability or whatever. But the long term futility of such a ploy is obvious. A social paroxysm is also threatening in the destructive wake of the failed coup. Already shouts are being heard in the Moscow streets like "clear out the Communists". McCarthy seems to have arrived in the Russian capital.

An incredible human being, Gorbachev is up and running again. The cry—"Gorbachev is finished"—is a bark without many echoes. Gorbachev's original plan involved a substantial economic, political and social restructuring of the Soviet Union. He envisaged the creation of a more pluralistic and decentralised politics and was particularly concerned with making the state bureaucracy responsible to public policy, law and popular mandate. This necessitated ending the absolute control of the state by the ruling cliques within the CPSU and providing real political opportunity for outside these narrow circles. On the economic front, he wished to privatise large sections of agriculture and industry and transfer the bulk of the public sector to control by regions and republics. His historic accomplishments have been immense. But he was not a good judge of persons. Virtually all his political allies either deserted or betrayed him. As has been said he was trying to "make a revolution without the revolutionaries".

From the start he relied upon the intelligentsia to be the partisans of his *perestroika*. They, however, gradually decided that completing the bourgeois revolution was more attractive and safer than making a socialist one. As they foresook him, Gorbachev fell back on the party bureaucrats, who at least mouthed the same words. He was guilty of having faith on them. And once they betrayed him he had no option but to disband the party with the trust that "authentic social forces" will organise themselves once again. Also, Gorbachev grossly underestimated the power of nationalism. Perhaps *perestroika* should have come first and *glasnost* later. A well fed nationalist is likely to make less trouble than a hungry one. Ideologically, he unwittingly created a vacuum, which could be filled only with the ideas and aspirations of Western capitalism.

II

THE events of the USSR can be viewed with mixed feelings. One cannot help applauding the courageous democratic forces that have taken to the streets. The people of the Soviet Union are up to decide their own fate and it is thrilling indeed to see them take their first fledgling steps towards democracy. Unfortunately, the reforms that should have taken place many many years ago never happened and now we are left with two equally bad choices. On the one hand, there was an ossified, discredited, stagnating political system that did not see the need for reform until too late. On the other, there is a revolution getting out of control, with no guiding ideology or programme other than narrow nationalism, ethnic aggrandisement, sectarianism, and a naive and unrealistic romance with capitalism.

There is a frightening spectacle of a nation with 27,000 nuclear weapons falling apart into fragments. The old ideas and values are shattered and the new ones have taken over. Many have begun to believe that capitalism is all milk and honey. They are mesmerised by the glitter of American wealth and power, especially what they saw of the latter in the Middle East war.

Deprived of even the simple comforts for the last so many decades, they long for the luxury goods they see on the television and the Hollywood films. Hollywood has turned out to be a more potent subversive force than the CIA. They do not see the sudden rise of inequality, the vast unemployment, the homelessness, the continuous recession in trade like what is happening in Poland and Germany.

What did the Soviet Union lag in? Many things. In retrospect the Soviet commissars committed the mistake of feeding the people with slogans and abstract ideas while they wanted better living standards and material comforts. There is always a limit to the burden the people will carry for a revolution. In the Soviet Union that limit had been crossed for many years, without the commissars knowing this. Politically, one policy which led to and accelerated the decline of the USSR was the misguided policy of "parity"—trying to match every costly missile system tit-for-tat. With the gross national product one-third that of the United States, it took almost three times the effort just to keep up with the West. Parity gave the illusion of strength while bleeding the economy white and delaying the badly needed reforms. The Soviet people also paid heavily for the sake of what was called "internationalism". They were manipulated to make unbearable sacrifices for the Chinese, the Vietnamese, the Cubans and many others in the Third World, because it was right ideologically and according to the tenets of Marxism-Leninism. They suffered but for a cause or so they thought. And then came along the votary of *perestroika* and his colleagues and told them that it was all a waste, that they were all dupes, that Soviet communism was a fraud, and their sacrifices were for nothing. How would anyone feel if after suffering for five decades uncomplainingly he was told that it was all a bad joke, a complete fraud? Wouldn't he go berserk? And this is what has happened all over the Soviet Union.

Gorbachev could not understand this. The long-suffering Soviet people were thus deprived of their guiding star, the idea of a just and classless society. That their own society was neither just nor classless made this idea even more precious for them. The yawning ideological void is now being filled with dreams—dreams of a golden world full of cars, refrigerators, washing machines, coloured TVs and the VCRs. But it takes hard labour and time to get them. No wonder some people, especially the disoriented youth, are looking for short cuts; hence the resurgence of crime in the country.

III

THE great Russian revolution is dead, at least for the time being and there are few in the Soviet Union to weep over it. It seems to take two factors to crush a revolution, the external pressure of capitalism (a capitalism which proved to be less moribund than these so-called socialist systems sired by the traditional Communists) and an internal vacuum which might have hoped to find popular support. A revolution has no option but to confront the external enemy. The question, however, is: can it create a society its people will voluntarily defend? The void where the people should have been, which lay at the centre of the Soviet Union for decades, was the product of many years of rot—of official lies (told blatantly to friends and foes alike), censorship, corruption, legal and illegal murder and the domination of the many by the few. Actually, the rot was there at the very beginning—in the ideology of the role of the vanguard party, in the party's authoritarian structure, in the lie of the so-called democratic centralism, in the distrust of the people. It took this rot seventy years to work its way through the whole society, and then came the collapse.

These events in the Soviet Union call attention to the dangers inherent in the one-party system. They call attention as there still are people who stick to it like the Chinese, the Cubans, the North Koreans and others of their ilk in the capitalist countries like our own CPI-M. The dogmatic Communists abhor the multi-party system or any other form of pluralism as the Devil abhors the Holy Water. To paraphrase Tolstoy's statement with regard to the Russian landlords: The Communists will do anything for the people except to get off their backs. The Soviet party held a complete monopoly of power for more than 70 years. And this power was without any checks and balances, that could postpone or curtail its operation. Under such circumstances the natural tendency was to award the most important posts in the government and the economy to "trusted people" which usually meant party members. In this way the highest paid and the cushiest jobs went to the cronies. A slogan current among the youth and students was: "Let us join the party. It is there that careers are made." With this came the various forms of privilege—special stores, chauffeured cars, best housing, *dachas,* vacation spas, elite schools for children, etc.

Many people outside thought that while there was less freedom in the Soviet Union there was more equality. There was neither freedom nor equality for the Soviet citizens, nor did they have a reasonable standard of living in the European context. In the vast areas of the interior Third World conditions prevailed, with millions living below the poverty line. The self-appointed vanguard party, without any mandate from the people, calling itself the Leninist party, by definition became an "ever-correct" party. It could never go wrong as it was based on the infallible doctrine of Marxism-Leninism. The party became the universal caretaker binding all other organisations and every step taken in the life of the people with its directives. Actually, the Soviet regime was transformed into an implacable dictatorship over the toiling masses. It was not a dictatorship of the proletariat but over the proletariat. The Soviet leaders proved to the hilt the old aphorism: "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." And when absolute power is joined with an ideology it becomes deadly.

The Soviet society thus became amorphous, inarticulate and incapable of initiative from below. It was completely at the mercy of the bureaucrats. And what these corrupt and fattened-with-privilege bureaucrats built over the years in Russia was not socialism but bureaucratic collectivism, or at best a bastardised form of socialism which their forefathers—Marx and Engels—would never have accepted as their offspring. As the noted Academician Yuri Abalkin has written in *Pravda:*

> One should clearly understand that we have not been building socialism and have not lived in socialist society. Otherwise we have to admit that a society in which the food problem is not solved, the housing problem is not resolved for the last seventy years, that society in which democratic institutions of a law-based state are absent can be called socialist.

To this can be added the following: a society in which the economy was stagnant except for a brief early period, where corruption was rampant, and inequalities were endemic, where the party rode roughshod over the people, and where the soulless bureaucracy ruled the roost, where the people were totally alienated from the leaders, the government and the state and where a single party rule became an instrument of oppression—could such a society be called socialist? No wonder the people are rejoicing over the banning of the CPSU which they see as their oppressor. They are gleefully demolishing the larger-than-life statues of the Communist leaders (not excluding those of Lenin) which they regard as the symbols of the Communist Party rule.

IV

THE situation in the Soviet Union is far from resolved, although the traditional ruling apparatus seems to be mortally shattered. Sixty years of life under the Stalinist police state and four decades of stagnation and declining living standards and economic dislocation led to the complete alienation of the people from their self-perpetuating rulers, and like all power-drunk rulers the Communists never knew that it had happened. This led to the emergence under Gorbachev of a class of professionals—budding entrepreneurs and managerial elite—who came to believe that the country could be saved and the economy restored only by turning the state into a vehicle for privatising national resources, promoting privileges and incentives for private businesses, especially the foreign ones.

But the problem for the "privateers" is that there is no risk-taking capitalists capable of reorganising the economy and replacing the disintegrating bureaucratic apparatus. And the foreign investors will not make large scale long term investments under a ruling elite that lacks decisive control over the society. The result is likely to be economic chaos. Moreover, the Soviet break-up is preparing for a further rupture in trade and supplies, leading to great shortages of goods and disruption of industry, like those of the early 1950s. The West is hungry to devour the choice economic sectors—energy, minerals, timber, space programmes, etc. while undermining the rest of the economy through exports like West Germany did to East Germany. The new dispensation promises the Russian people decades of sacrifice for the free market just as Stalin sacrificed generations of Russians for building a pseudo-socialist society. How much and how long can the people suffer? However, the difficulty facing the present Soviet leadership is that the attempt to. shift away from the bureaucratic command economy and introduce elements of market economy have resulted in the worst of both the worlds. As production fell catastrophically over the past four years all the leaders have come to realise that they cannot go back on the old system. But they also know that trying to introduce a Western-style market economy carried enormous risks including a potential unemployment up to 40 million. They are trapped and find themselves on the horns of a dilemma.

Western countries were quick to oppose the August coup. They are also keen to see that Gorbachev survives—and with him the Soviet Central Government. There is particular concern about control mechanisms over the huge Soviet nuclear arsenal, which remains only second to Washington's overkill capacity. Initial concern in Europe about how to deal financially with a crumbling Soviet Union has given way to a widespread enthusiasm about the prospect of dealing with the individual republics. The counter-coup has changed the West's image of the Soviet Union from a great riddle to an immense market. European vultures slowly circle the Soviet caracass. Numerous business people, opportunists, academics and consultants are hawking themselves around the Baltics, the Ukraine, Georgia and elsewhere in a mad rush to be in the first. The aid discussions in the G-7 meet and after have moved much closer to acceptance of some kind of financial packet even though know-how and emergency food provision remain the top items on the agenda. A number of "lifeline teams", designed to deal with food shortage this winter, are being prepared with transport and distribution companies being brought in to transform the Soviet food supply system in the process.

The Soviets' acceptance by the IMF, though not yet as a full member, shows a new willingness by the West to consider a Marshall Plan-style package. Even the complete capitulation of the Soviet Government is not enough for London which, like the White House, is pressing for arms cuts and the new reform package before financial aid is given. Western leaders have not been keen, meanwhile, to admit that their very reluctance to provide financial aid to Gorbachev at the July G-7 summit may have been a major factor in the coup. Neil Kinnock has accused the ruling Tories and their Washington allies of aiding and abetting the Russian coup, by insisting that "Moscow build a house before being allowed access to the bricks". The "Marshall Plan" for the Soviet reconstruction is not far off; there is hardly any doubt as to what is going to emerge out of this reconstruction.

V

WHAT are the prospects for peace in the world? The events in the Soviet Union hold great, promise as well as grave dangers. On the one hand, Gorbachev's bold initiatives have vastly reduced tensions and have helped to end the Cold War. The arms race has been reversed considerably. The dangers, however, arise from the fact that there is now no counterweight to the United States, which remains an imperialist state with worldwide hegemonic ambitions. Whatever was the character of the Soviet Union (whether it was socialist, a degenerate workers' state, or just plain bureaucratic capitalism) no one can deny that it served to blunt and even neutralise the adventurism of the Pentagon. A victory by the Vietnamese people would have been much more bloody and, according to some, even impossible without Soviet aid. The recently published "Declassified Documents" show that the USA had elaborate plans to use nuclear weapons against the Vietnamese people (Operation

Vulture in 1954 and Operation Duck Hook in 1969) but they were all cancelled because of the fears of Soviet retaliation. Also the existence of the Soviet Union accelerated the growth of guerrilla movements in Asia, Africa and Latin America. It was because of the Soviet Union that the Cuban revolution was stabilised despite all the efforts made by Pentagon over the years to destablise it. However, without the Russian counterweight, the CIA will treat the entire world like it has been treating Latin America where there is no counterweight. The infamous Monroe Doctrine, which condemned the peoples of Latin America to two centuries of poverty and misery, will now be extended to the world. What happened in the so-called Gulf war, and is happening even now, amply proves the point made above.

VI

WESTERN politicians and the so-called mainstream media have been telling us *ad nauseam* over the past months that the crisis in the Soviet Union and the collapse of one-party rule represent the death of socialism and the triumph of capitalism. Unfortunately, many of the Left seem to have accepted much, if not all, of this argument. Even some with impeccable anti-Stalinist record feel the same way because they still viewed the Soviet Union as an alternative to capitalism.

This, however, was and is a totally wrong view. Far from being an alternative, the society that Stalin built was simply a variant of capitalism that could be called bureaucratic capitalism. This system replaced the capitalist contradiction between social production and the private appropriation of profits with that between the social ownership of means of production and minority control over the investment of the surplus production. Actually, Stalin's rise to power was part of a counter-revolution that demolished 1917. It was a Russian Thermidore. The goals of a socialist revolution were abandoned in favour of building an industrial power capable of competing militarily with the West. This meant the subordination of the needs of the people to the goal of increased production. Just as in the West, a tiny minority controlled the economy, exploiting the mass of the population with the aim of accumulating capital. Such a society was, unfortunately, accepted as a socialist society by the loyal Communists and sympathizers all over the world. And the Soviet rulers mouthed the slogans of socialism for decades while exploiting and oppressing the mass of the population.

The August coup's defeat has given sections of working class greater confidence in their ability to

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intervene on the political stage. And the collapse of the Communist Party has swept away a powerful ideological block. Now that the old Staninist ideology has been abandoned, a major barrier to the building of a genuine socialist opposition has disappeared. For this reason the socialists should not be mourning the death of Stalinism. The task before them is to disentangle the real Marxist tradition from the Stalinist distortions that have obscured it for three generations.

Socialism is not dead. After all social progress is not an intellectual exercise, driven by the fine words of utopian thinkers. It is a by-product of brutal necessity. As long as there is suffering and oppression, there will be resistance to it. This struggle against social inequality and for social progress is the engine driving the world history forward. The yearning and struggle for socialism will end only when there is genuine social equality on earth. The people through their struggles and ripening understanding will succeed in establishing some more attractive form of socialism—a democratic socialism without cults, without dogmatism, without an infallible party or doctrine. ■

PUBLIC SECTOR

Ensuring Viability of MOU System

EHTESHAM HUSSAIN

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) system has attracted criticism from several quarters. The most important concern has been the degree of trust and relationship between the government and public sector undertakings (PSUs). It is generally felt that the MOU system has not succeeded in eliminating 'back seat driving' by the people in the government.

With the liberalisation of the economy and stress on competitiveness, the Government of India in 1986 started the scheme of signing the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Central public sector undertakings (PSUs). The system has to provide operational freedom and flexibility to the PSUs as also to bring into sharper focus the concept of performance accountability. But due to recent criticism about the role and utility of the MOU system, it has become a matter of debate by the PSU managements whenever an opportunity arises to understand the relationship between the PSUs and the government.

In 1991-92 the Department of Public Enterprises (DPE) has selected about 104 new enterprises to sign the MOU of which five are chronic loss-makers with high social obligation. Twentythree PSUs have refused to sign the MOU due to the lack of clarity of conditions by both sides. The reasons differ in each case and this is likely to give a setback to the attempts made by the government to improve the functioning of these enterprises through the MOU. Even the trade unions and the DPE are locked in a row over the implementation of the MOUs. While the DPE has charged the Unions with being indifferent to the MOUs, the trade unions have refuted the allegation and said that labour has no hand in the formulation of the MOUs.

Twentythree PSUs had signed MOUs in 1990-91 against 18 in 1989-90. These account for roughly 75 per cent of the total investment made in the sector and 80 per cent of the turnover. The format of the MOU was radically changed in 1989 after a two year study of the system adopted by the other countries including France and South Korea. The format adopted is a mix of the two models catering to the Indian public sector. A major shift from the first model adopted in 1988 was that the MOU would not specify targets. The PSUs will be asked to define their own efficiency yardstick in consultation with their parent Ministries. The MOU will state that the unit will have to perform better in the area of efficiency adopted by it. For instance, if profitability is adopted as a yardstick the company will have to earn higher profits as compared to the previous year.

Given such transformations in concept the MOU should be the harbinger of a fundamental change in the PSU culture. But all the PSU Chief Executives do not view the MOUs as the ultimate answers to their problems. Actually, the problem is that MOUs involve two unequal sides. Both the company and the government are required by an MOU to adhere to specified targets or schedules but heads of some concerns complain that their Ministries do not clear projects according to the MOU schedule. Further, companies can be hauled up if they fall short of the goals, not the Ministries. The government officials counter that Ministries are responsible to Parliament for the companies that fall within their ambit. As for complaints about interference, those who defend the MOUs say that this depends entirely on the rapport a company head is able to establish with the Ministry. Moreover, company managements propose their own targets to the Ministry before an MOU is finalised and may be tempted to understand targets to which they commit themselves on paper.

Although the Chief Executives of the PSUs have collectively taken the view that in practice the necessary devolution of authority to public enterprises has not been effected through the MOUs, they are of the opinin that the entire concept of the MOUs should undergo a review so that the PSUs are run on commercial and business lines. In 1989 the government set up a committee to evaluate the effectiveness of the MOUs. The need for such a panel has arisen as at present there is no mechanism in the government to gauge the functioning efficacy of the MOUs between the PSUs and the administrative Ministries. In fact, it is argued that without a mechanism of this type the whole concept of the MOUs will be defeated in its purpose.

◆

THE policy of the Government of India on the public sector has been more or less consistent. There have, however, been differences according to the perceptions of each individual. Actually, there are many reasons to justify the introduction of the MOU system in the PSUs. Under the Central Government alone there are as many as 230 PSUs with investment of Rs 470,000 million and more than twice the number of enterprises in the state sector. Instead of meeting the insignificant target fixed by the Planning Commission, these enterprises incurred colossal losses. According to a study completed by the Institute of Public Enterprises (IPE) for the Ninth Finance Commission and the Planning Commission, these enterprises have negative profitability at the net marginal levels. Out of 230 PSUs, 57 incurred losses in 1988-89 and about 300 out of 754 state enterprises have suffered losses in 1986-87. The financial statements of the Central PSUs for 1988-89 reveal an accumulated loss of about Rs 10,000 million against reserves and surpluses of about Rs 120,000 million thereby showing that the accretion in the net worth was almost conspicuous by its absence.

If the public sector can have a net profit of say Rs 80,000 million to Rs 100,000 million a year the government's finance would be in great shape, its developmental activities can be pursued without big budget deficits and large borrowings from domestic and external sources. The task is not that difficult. The country's 40 year old PSUs are capable of meeting the challenge provided they are allowed to function professionally and their objectives are clearly defined.

In a recent press conference, Moosa Raza, Chairman of SCOPE, announced that the SCOPE Executive Board recommended for further strengthening of the MOU system and elimination of government interference in it. Stressing that the government should acquire technical expertise and appreciation of the MOUs, Raza said that the Board was of the view that the government should not leave any lacunae in fulfilling its part of the MOU system.

There is a move to amend certain clauses in the MOUs. It has been said that the government interference with the PSU managements is so strong that the PSUs are required to follow as many as 800 guidelines from the DPE alone. Actually what the PSUs want is total autonomy like their counterparts in the private sector. The MOUs are no substitute to real autonomy. And, it would be impractical to expect accountability from a management denied the enabling oxygen of operational freedom.

To operationalise the MOU, the responsibility for installing the operating system including charting out the information flow and providing information could be entrusted to autonomous bodies such as the Standing Conference of Public Enterprises (SCOPE) and Institute of Public Enterprises (IPE). Such bodies would work as research units of public enterprises responsible for developing the appropriate performance evaluation system, obtaining relevant informations, and processing them for the requisite analysis; and advising the PSE Boards and the task force on various issues concerning performance evaluation.

So, the MOU system has to be made comprehensive if results are to be achieved and the government while concerning itself only with the issues included in it should also abide by its commitments. It is argued that there is a need to bring about parity between the two in letter and spirit. The boards of the PSUs should be vested with more power and autonomy. It is believed that the success or failure of an MOU entirely depends on the degree of trust between both the parties and any overstepping by any party may jeopardise the agreement. ■

SPWP: Successor to CPSU

ROY MEDVEDEV

In the "years of stagnation" noted historian Roy Medvedev was expelled from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, his books on Soviet history were banned and he was considered a dissident. He was later not only rehabilitated but also elected a member of the Central Committee of the CPSU at its last Congress and also to the Soviet Parliament. In the following article which he wrote for Pravda *of December 17, 1991, he explains the programme of the Socialist Party of the Working People (SPWP) of Russia adopted by its Organising Committee on Octobebr 26 for the forthcoming Congress of the party.*

—Editor

As a member of the Initiative Group for setting up a party of socialist forces of Left orientation, as a People's Deputy of the USSR and now as a member of the Organising Committee for conducting the first Congress of the party, which should be held in Moscow on December 21-22, 1991, I receive an enormous amount of letters and telegrams (not to speak of telephone calls), which goes to show not only the timeliness of founding the SPWP but also the need to explain certain problems connected with its aims and objects and methods of work. It goes without saying that in this article I can undertake to do this only partially.

In the hundreds of letters and telegrams we have received our initiative has been heartily welcomed. P.V. Manchenko, V.P. Ptukhin, M.P. Chumak and other comrades from the Korenovsk Improved Seeds State Farm, who have already set up a cell of the SPWP in their locality, say:

> We support your initiative to create a Russian party of the Left forces of socialist orientation on the basis of the progressive forces of the CPSU. This is the only way for upholding and realisation of socialist ideas, for preserving the active forces of the party of Communists.

Yu.B. Kozhevnikov writes from Kaluga:

> With all my heart I welcome the founding of your party. I am ready to join the ranks of the defenders of socialism and to help in the creation of the party. I have talked about this with my comrades (about 15 persons) and none has refused to cooperate.

From Karelia V.M. Dorovsky writes:

> We have already set up a party organisation of the SPWP. Members of our organisation are employees of industrial enterprises, workers, engineers, technical personnel and pensioners Eighty percent of them are members of the CPSU.

There are letters also from individual members of the CPSU. Z.V. Aleksandrova from Saltykovka township in Moscow district writes:

> Please accept me as a member of the SPWP. I support the ideological positions of the organisers of the party, its aims and objects and its chief programmatic ideas.

A number of correspondents, naturally, enquire about our attitude to other parties which have claimed to be true successors of the CPSU and which were set up in the recent months—the VKPB (Party of Bolsheviks), RKRP (Russian Peasants and Workers Party), NPSR (People's Socialist Party of Russia—"Rutskoi's party"), the Union of Communists of RSFSR and so on. A.P. Novoselv from Tomsk, a CPSU member since 1931, writes:

> Dear Roy Aleksandrovich, how do you evaluate active work to defend the Leninist heritage, to defend the Bolshevik programme of the CPSU, which is being carried on by Nina Aleksandrovna Andreyeva?

It is not always easy to answer these questions.

* *We shall consider our natural allies all those who fight for the renewal of socialism, for the defence of the working people.* However, polemics are inevitable with those who want to reanimate not only what is best but also what was the worst in the CPSU and our history, those who stand by extremely dogmatic positions and who do not accept the changes that have occurred in Soviet society, those who, as before, exhibit extreme intolerance to different trends in society and in the socialist movement.

Yes, our party declares itself to be a party of the working people.

* *We express the interests of those who live on wages, who live on their own labour,* whether it be a worker, an engineer, a peasant, an employee, a teacher or a representative of the creative intelligentsia.

* *We shall not represent the interests of the new classes of entrepreneurs that are arising in our country,* though we shall also not oppose their

lawful activities.

* *We stand for a multistructured society but with social property in the leading position.* The more so because a number of parties have already been set up for expressing and protecting the interests of entrepreneurs, traders and shopkeepers. We shall carry on a political competition with these parties through parliamentary and civilised methods.

* *We stand for pluralism of opinions, for freedom of expression and organisation.* In our statutes we speak about "democratic unity" but there is no mention of "democratic centralism".

* *We are against the separation of workers into some sort of a special class. More so, we are against the "dictatorship of the proletariat".* This does not, of course, exclude the possibility of cooperation and joint action, which is also understood by the most sensible representatives of other movements which have been organised on the basis of the CPSU. Yu.A. Gasparyan from Kiev writes:

> I am an inveterate Stalinist, just as you are an inveterate anti-Stalinist. But the situation today is such that we must lock for points of contacts, rather than sympathy for some personality or the other. While fighting against Stalinism, people who were carrying on this struggle did not notice how Leninism and socialism were being destroyed.

Many people ask us about our attitude towards the preservation of the Union.

* *Of course, the SPWP stands for friendship of peoples, for ideas of internationalism, but it is strongly opposed to the use of force in settling national conflicts.*

* *Although our party functions only within the framework of the RSFSR, we shall cooperate with like-minded parties and movements in other republics.* And we already feel that there is a responsive striving on their part.

Writer A.Ya. Mirarbayev from Samarkand in Uzbekistan:

> I strongly condemn all acts of lawlessness against the CPSU, I support your activity for the revival of a party of the working people. I support the decisions of the conference held on October 26 to found a Socialist Party of the Working People and am in agreement with its programmatic declaration. I shall with all the strength and means at my command try to realise the party's policy in life.

◆

IT is but natural that many Communists and people with socialist convictions are still biding their time; they want to know how any new party which declares itself to be communist or socialist will conduct itself in practice. Many find themselves disoriented and are suffering from disillusionment and even depression. They no longer want to join any party. There are not a few who even heaved a sigh of relief, because they had joined the party not because of any convictions but because this provided the only possibility of personal advance in almost any walk of life, even in a field very far removed from politics. There is here a certain positive process of cleansing. Very many Communists have preserved their primary units as organisations of the CPSU, counting not only on the removal of various types of bans, but also the rehabilitation of the party. A Communist from St. Petersburg writes to me:

> We from the 'bottom' are trying to preserve cells of the primary units to find out who is ready, taking into consideration the new circumstances (which we have still to carefully analyse), to continue the cause of genuine democracy, not the false and tragifarcical democracy which the "Democrats" are trying with foaming mouths day and night to force into the consciousness of the common people.

I am not giving here the name of my correspondent; he is working in a state organisation and is formally guilty of acting against the decisions and decrees that have been issued. Some of these groups are already coming out of their 'underground' and are joining one or the other party from among those I have mentioned earlier.

"Our group in Kurgan is small," writes a representative of this group, "as since the time of the dispersal of the Communist Party we have been functioning illegally under the provisional name of 'Marxists of Russia'."

Quite a few people want to know what is the attitude towards the newly arising communist and socialist movement of some of the former members of the Polit-Bureau and Secretariat of the Central Committee of the CPSU. I am not in possession of any comprehensive information on this score and shall therefore refrain from commenting. I cannot, however, restrain myself from saying that in almost all the letters we have received there is condemnation of the position of M.S. Gorbachev as the General Secretary of the CPSU until recently. A veteran from St. Petersburg, I.I. Solovyov, writes to me:

> I and my comrades would like to join the Socialist Party. We are the initiative group forming the 'Union of the Defenders of the Motherland' and we have contacts with former members of the armed forces. The majority of us have remained Communists and we should like to be represented at the SPWP Congress. I have been authorised to represent this group, which has now upwards of ten thousand members; and this is just the beginning. True, I have been told that if you decide to invite the former General Secretary to the Congress,

> then hundreds of thousands of *former members* of the forces will boycott *you* and will start a campaign against you in all available mass media. I am a former naval officer. I have fought for nearly 13 years. The captain leaves the sinking ship last of all, but our former General Secretary was the first to desert the ship.

I do not entirely agree with the tone of this letter. Even before the General Secretary not a few former leaders of the party, from Yeltsin to Shevardnadze, Yakovlev and Laptev— one could enumerate many more—had left the party. But one cannot ignore such feelings, which are not limited to the former war veterans alone. One cannot ignore this just as one cannot ignore seeing the collapse of the *perestroika* launched in 1985.

I am deeply convinced that *perestroika* was necessary, that our society needed the deepest-going reforms, as did Soviet economy and the CPSU. *However, the chief cause of its failure was that no one really prepared the conditions to make* perestroika *successful, no one really saw the reforms with any foresight. Our leaders were inactive just where they should have been most actively working, and they actively reconstituted institutions and social systems which they should have altered extremely slowly and carefully.* Unfortunately, this is going on even today during the transition to the market; as if the new and the former leaders do not understand that the introduction of market relations demands ten times more skilled regulating, more subtle, almost like a jeweller's work, leadership than in the notorious command-administrative system. *But the opportunity of carrying out cardinal reconstruction without worsening the economic, legal and cultural capital of Soviet society was missed. And in this I see the initiators of* perestroika *as being most to blame. It is not a serious attitude to throw the responsibility on the opponents of* perestroika, *because in any complex thing one has to take into account also "the resistance of materials".*

One of the correspodnents writes:

> My name is I. A Vennikov from Novokuibyshevsk. I have been a member of the CPSU since 1942 I am writing this to express my satisfaction at the formation of the Socialist Party of the Working People. The party has declared its adherence to Marxism-Leninism . What can I do to enlist the Communists of Novokuibyshevsk for work in the new party?

I must note here that our programmatic declaration speaks of socialism, but not of Marxism-Leninism. Of course, we do not reject Marxism with which the greatest movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are associated, movements which changed the world on the whole for the better. We consider Marx a great revolutionary, politican and scholar. However, today we also clearly realise the utopianism and even mistaken nature of many ideas and theses of classical Marxism, which seemed so attractive in theory, but which turned out to be unrealisable in practice.

And there is nothing to be surprised at in this. This sort of thing usually happens in science. To take an example, in the nineteenth century biology and scientific Darwinism were almost synonymous. However, during the last 150 years the borders of biological science have extended to such an extent, in the process disproving many statements of Darwin, that we—while acknowledging his services as the founder of scientific biology—are developing today dozens of biological sciences, and not merely Darwinism.

As distinct from religion, science usually bears the names of its "founding fathers" only for the first few decades.

The same should be said about Leninism, in which the ideas of world revolution occupy too great a place and which gave too great a role to violence in methods of reconstructing society—and to direct violence at that. Lenin never concealed this, as he did not hide his adherence to class morality in the narrow sense of the term. He said that whatever is useful to the revolution is moral. Today we cannot accept this postulate; and even "yesterday" it was erroneous. But we still consider Lenin to be a great revolutionary. A revolutionary in the positive, not negative, sense of this word.

While we are on this subject, some of the participants in the founding conference called us Social Democrats, revisionist and so on. *It would be wrong to turn concepts such as "Bolshevism", "Social Democratism" or "revisionism" in to terms of abuse. Scientific socialism needs development, that is it also needs revision.* As we know, the Social Democrats advocate the reformist path of development. In conditions of capitalist society this means "betterment", modernisation of capitalism, extension of the social protection of the working people from the oppression of capitalists—something which in itself is nothing objectionable. But it does not remove the chief vices of capitalism. *In conditions of "real socialism" social democratism could mean the "betterment" and humanisation of socialist society, ridding it of all signs of barrack, equalising, totalitarian, state capitalism.* This basic difference is not understood today by that party in Russia which has adopted the name of "Social Democratic Party'.

We do not conceal the fact that the name "Socialist Party" is not a question of tactics for us. In our registration document in the section on "Main Aims of Activity", it is said:

* *Peaceful, constitutional extrication of Russian society from its profound economic political and spiritual crisis; the formation of a law-abiding democratic state on the basis of radical reforms, building a multistructured economy and a democratic society.*

This is our stand and we call upon only those people to join us who share our views and convictions on the whole, while not denying the right to form various types of movements and groups within the party. ■

(Translated by Ravi M. Bakaya)

Gorbachev's Remarkable Achievements

VLADIMIR RADYUHIN

The sense of anxiety that dominated Mikhail Gorbachev's farewell address as he formally relinquished his post on December 25 night could be attributed to concern about his own future. It was a feeling of a man who had to abandon a job half-finished.

The first and only executive President did accomplish the Herculean task of dismantling the most powerful and enduring totalitarian regime in modern history. But he had to go before a truly democratic society could emerge on the ruins of dictatorship. The old system has collapsed before a new one could take root, Gorbachev said.

He saw his country being swept by a wave of separatism and nationalism bordering on chauvinism. The power that fell from the hands of the Communist Party elite has been picked up by ex-party apparatchiks tickled at the prospect of becoming leaders of independent republics. Beneath the democratic garb they are a product of the communist system that taught them little more than the art of political intrigues.

Gorbachev must be feeling deeply uneasy about their ability to carry on his democratic reforms. The revolutionary way in which they brought him down in disregard for law and order is a dangerous symptom. Gorbachev has lost power because he tried to conduct civilised politics in an uncivilised country. Not once during his nearly seven years in power did he resort to undemocratic ways of power struggle. He remained true to his democratic principles to the very end and accepted the verdict of the Commonwealth of former Soviet Republics that had dealt the death blow to his idea of a single confederative state.

Gorbachev wished the new Commonwealth well and vowed to do his best to help it gain strength. There is, however, little he can do now. Hence his sense of alarm. His greatest concern is that the post-*perestroika* reforms stay within democratic and peaceful bounds. Notwithstanding his many failures, Gorbachev's greatest triumph was the remarkably peaceful character of his reforms. True, a few thousand people were killed in the ethnic violence but the price had to be paid for dismantling the totalitarian system that claimed about 10 million lives to assert itself in the 1917 revolution and the civil war that followed and scores of millions more to sustain itself for 70-odd years.

The future of what used to be the Soviet Union may not be cloudless but at least there can be no return to the communist tyranny. And Gorbachev is the man who drew the line to that past. He has set the standard of democratic leadership against which all politicians in this country will henceforth be judged. Hopefully, he can now lead the way in fostering standards of democratic opposition. ■

(*Courtesy: The Hindu*)

Kagarlitsky on Unity of Responsible Revolutionaries

The following is the interview of Boris Kagarlitsky, a prominent leader of the Socialist Party in Russia (that has now been turned into the Party of Labour through amalgamation with some other groups). The interview was given by Kagarlitsky, an elected member of the Moscow Soviet, to Sumit Chakravartty of Mainstream *at the Moscow Soviet building in the Russian capital in mid-November.*

—Editor

SC: Could you tell us something about yourself?

BK: About myself? Well, I am 33 years old, born in 1958. I got involved in Left-wing Opposition groups in 1978. There was a group which later became known as Young Socialists. I was in it. I was imprisoned under Brezhnev. Fortunately for me Brezhnev died during the period of our imprisonment and we were liberated. Later with the rest of the Socialists we participated in the democratic movement and I was one of the members of the Coordination Committee of the Moscow People's Front which was one of the most important non-official non-Communist organisations.

SC: But were you not a Communist?

BK: No.

SC: You were never a Communist?

BK: No.

SC: But you are a socialist?

BK: Yes. I never joined the Party, I never acted as a Communist Party member. In that sense I have a big advantage compared to most of the people who are now involved in politics. Those who were very loyal Communist Party members, functionaries and even bosses, now pretend that they were long time dissidents, anti-Communists and so on while in fact not having been a CP person I have the advantage of not having any need to be anti-Communist today.

Well, I participated in the formation of the Moscow People's Front and then got elected to the Moscow Soviet, that is, the Moscow City Council. And when the Socialist Party was formed I became one of the members of the Executive Committee of the Socialist Party.

SC: When was that party set up?

BK: In 1990, that is, last year. We now have five members in the Executive. Originally we had nine. Later we dropped some of them.

SC: What is the strength of the organisation?

BK: Well, in fact if you count the actual members in the party it is very weak and small. It has about 300 people.

SC: Mainly in Moscow?

BK: No, in different parts of the country. However, it has deputies in local governments in different regions but mainly in Moscow where we have a very strong presence in local politics.

SC: Why did you want to preserve the name 'socialist' which has become quite derogatory in the circumstances prevailing in this country at present?

BK: I don't feel that the word 'socialist' has been compromised. I feel that the press, the mainstream press as the non-official media, is now launching quite a huge anti-socialist campaign. But this has already started to backfire. If you speak to people who are really our social base, the workers, the people from the enterprises and so on, you never find any anti-socialist views in them. On the contrary, labels such as liberals are completely unattractive to the people. So in that sense all this talk about socialism being thoroughly discredited in the minds of the masses, I think, is a complete lie.

What is true is that the nomenklatura, the bureaucracy itself, had certain reasons to drop the communist and socialist rhetorics. So they decided to drop the socialist rhetoric, the socialist ideology or the socialist slogans. What is typical of the nomenklatura is that for many reasons it decided to drop the ideological explanations and legitimisation for itself. And of course this is very much presented in the media in the propaganda. So in this sense it is hard to be socialist here now. But I must say, only in this sense.

SC: You don't find any other problems?

BK: No.

SC: So there are no impediments in the functioning of your party as such, are there?

BK: No, there are plenty of problems with the authorities, especially now, that is, after the August events.

SC: You are not being discriminated against, are you?

BK: Well, we are very badly discriminated against. And it is getting from bad to worse. But that's a different story. We have problems with the upper class, with the upper layers of society, with the structures, with the authorities. However, we don't have problems with the people.

SC: There is no anti-socialist hysteria among the people?

BK: No. Maybe among some intellectuals probably. But even among the intellectuals it is now slowing down because the people are more and more capable of understanding that they are just cheated.

That is exactly why I think the Government of Russia is more and more attempting to use force, to use the strength of the administration while they are feeling that it is getting harder and harder to manipulate the people, to get the people to accept what they are doing. That is why they are increasingly interested in the use of force.

SC: Would you kindly further elaborate on the different streams of the socialist movement in this country at present?

BK: There are different trends. Some groups emerged from within the Communist Party. One trend was represented by the group called the Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists (CAS). They are rather popular among the students.

SC: What do they propagate?

BK: Self-management, anti-statist ideas. They are not anarchists in the proper sense. They are in favour of a weak state and a strong society.

SC: How strong are they?

BK: They are mostly strong among the students. They have some influence among the miners, the workers as well.

SC: You are speaking only of the Russian Federation in this case?

BK: No. Their movement exists all over the ex-Soviet Union including the Baltic Republics. But, of course, they are mostly in Russia.

Then there is a current which comes out of the Marxist Platform of the CPSU that is led by Buzgalin and Kalganov. And there are some other minor currents on the Left. The Left is, of course, rather fragmented in general. And now after the August events we all came to the conclusion that there is a need to form a strong and united party of the Left. Hence the Organising Committee of the Party of Labour was formed. And this is also supported by the trade union leaders in many cities including Moscow. This has created quite a new situation.

SC: Which groups have been brought under its umbrella?

BK: Well, the Anarcho-Syndicalists, the Marxist Platform of Buzgalin.

SC: Not the other wing of the Marxist Platform?

BK: No. In fact the Marxist Platform is split precisely on this issue. Some of them joined the Party of Labour while the others did not. The same thing happened, by the way, with the Socialist Party. Because we have a minority which doesn't want to join the Party of Labour.

SC: So these are the three streams in the Party of Labour: Anarcho-Syndicalists, Marxist Platform of Buzgalin and the majority of the Socialist Party?

BK: Yes. We are all going to merge into the Party of Labour.

SC: Are you having any Congress or Conference?

BK: No, I think in late November or early December we are going to have an all-Russian meeting of the representatives of the local Organising Committees of the future local branches to decide when we will have the founding Congress of the new party. The Socialist Party continues to exist as a party but in all possibility it is going to merge with the other groups quite soon.

SC: Let us now come to your general assessment of the prevailing situation in this country from the time of the August developments or even earlier.

BK: Well, what we are facing is a very dramatic period of transition from the late Communist system, whatever you may call it, a totalitarian system which eroded into some sort of democracy and finally to a new dictatorship which is anti-Communist, authoritarian, and more or less an ideologically motivated dictatorship. The irony of the situation is that what is remaining of democracy in this country is also mostly by-products of the erosion of the Communist totalitarian regime. So in that sense the elimination of the remaining Communist structures is also the elimination of the remaining democratic structures. They are inter-connected.

I think although there was no conscious decision of the Communist Party to bring democracy to Russia, in a way, the party really collapsed into democracy. But actually now with a new government in power we are losing freedoms with every passing day and that is one of the major issues now politically.

The new Russian Government, after eliminating the Communist Party, has a new target: the trade unions. So probably its next step will be the liquidation or at least manipulation of the trade union activities.

That is why now we feel that one of the main items on our agenda is about defending the trade union rights: the right to organise, defending the trade union properties from being just confiscated by the government, and so on.

Of course, the unions that we have got are not necessarily very good. They are very bureaucratically centralised, inherited from the old regime, and so on. But if the government's project on liquidation of the unions succeeds we will have no unions at all.

SC: Does this mean that the ex-Communists who were also part of the nomenklatura have just changed their colours and become democrats?

BK: Of course, of course. It is no accident that there are almost no dissidents in the new leadership.

SC: Would you also place the President of the Russian Federation in the same category?

BK: Well, he is one of the worst.

I think the whole ruling elite is a kind of mobilisation of the worst and most corrupt elements of the nomenklatura itself.

SC: When you say that the next target is the trade unions has there been any demonstrative act?

BK: Of course.

SC: Like?

BK: Well, the first decree of Yeltsin on de-Partyisation...

SC: That had come before the August coup?

BK: Yes. That had a special clause prohibiting the trade unions to operate at the enterprise level without agreement with the enterprise administration. Which means that only if the enterprise administration wants the unions to operate will they be allowed to operate. That was even before the August events.

Then there was quite a lot of anti-union propaganda in the official media and there were several attempts to de-syndicalise the enterprises. The unions are very worried also because they do not feel strong enough to resist successfully these offensives. They are very bureaucratised and it is very hard for them to face real life, real politics, real problems. You see, for years they had remained totally stagnant.

So although there are some dynamic sectors in the unions, some of the new leaders are very active and smart, not all of them are like that.

SC: Are these active leaders getting organised in any particular body?

BK: First of all, it is the Party of Labour which organises them. So that's why they are mostly supporters of the Party of Labour. Almost always they are also supporters of trade union reforms.

SC: But the Party of Labour is yet to be formed.

BK: It is already in the process of being set up. Its branches are being formed.

SC: Where do you have the maximum strength? In which particular area?

BK: Well, once again Moscow, of course. But it seems we are getting involved in building serious branches all over Russia. So I think it is going to be a national scale party.

SC: Are you having links with international socialist groups, the Socialist International for example?

BK: We are not Social Democrats. So that's why we are not going to have formal links with the Socialist International.

SC: But at the same time you are not Communist as well.

BK: Well, you see, the point is that we insist that the time has come, especially in the Eastern bloc countries, to build the new identity of the Left.

SC: Which should be Socialist?

BK: Yes, but neither Social Democrat nor Communist.

SC: That's quite interesting because this may help coordination of your organisation with some of the Leftist groups in India.

BK: Exactly so. Let me explain our position. On the one hand what we reject is communism. Of course, the principles of rigid, centralist organisation and the ideological consequences of this rigidity—I do not mean just the Stalinist version of communism but....

SC: The legacy.

BK: Yes. What I want to say is that the more civilised ways of being a Communist. For example, if you speak of the Bolshevik tradition it is a centralist, vanguardist creation. We reject vanguardism. Also Trotskyism is rejected. Luxemburgism is more attractive because Rosa Luxemburg's attitude towards continuous movement and so on is more positive. But anyway, not just the Leninist version but also the Trotskyite brand of Bolshevism is not working.

SC: Social-Revolutionaries are also out?

BK: What do you mean?

SC: You have a party of Social-Revolutionaries who are bringing out a paper called *Revolutoionnaya Rossia* (Revolutionary Russia).

BK: Some of them are also going to join the Party of Labour. At least some of their branches.

On the other hand, what we also reject is social democracy which is a kind of luxury for the rich. You can't be a Social Democrat in an underdeveloped or a semi-developed country or the Eastern bloc countries which are now sort of pushed back into underdevelopment. It is a luxury for the rich, efficient Western-style capitalist societies where they can afford having stable distribution policies with the labour movement both well organised and at the same time quite loyal and capable of accepting compromises.

The point about compromises is that it is not as if we don't want compromises. We have nothing against compromises but if you are serious, in the situation we have there is almost no space for real compromise where the rules of the game are those of a society in crisis, a society growing poorer and poorer. By the way, we now speak quite a lot about the Indianisation of the Soviet society. You know this famous point about Belgium and India? That is, one part of the population is getting more or less the Belgian living standards and ways of life and levels of modernisation while the rest is still India.

We reject the free distributionist and gradualist social democratic approach. Now people are debating quite a lot about the definition of revolutionary reformism, a new project, which means that you have to be neither vanguardist nor gradualist, you see. (laughs)

SC: You accept the role of the market? Are you in favour of the Chinese concept: market within state regulations?

BK: Of course, we are in favour of a regulated market. But we have to discuss: who is regulating? What kind of state is regulating the market? And how is it regulating the market? Because one of the slogans we have devised is: neither more state nor less state but a different state. It means that you have to restructure the state for sure, and you have to restructure the public sector together with the state; also subordinating it to certain ways of democratic control and democratic foundations of priorities of investments, for example.

And we accept the need not only for a certain existence of the market but also for the existence of a dynamic private sector in the economy.

But the privatisation drive which is now going on in Russia and East European countries is preventing the formation of the entrepreneuring private sector from below. You see, while they are privatising the big state firms keeping the centralist structures of the economy intact, keeping the monopolies, they are just turning public monopolies into private monopolies. This we consider to be a purely reactionary move. That's why we are against privatisation but not against private property.

SC: Now, as for these private monopolies which are being set up, you don't have enough capital, even if you set up conglomerates they will not be able to operate without coordination of links with the transnationals. Would that not amount to the transnationals taking over the major state enterprises?

BK: That is what's happening in Eastern Europe; not yet in Russia. But we are in favour of renationalising the public monopolies to concentrate public capital in the hands of the public sector.

SC: But then you have to change the public sector, restructure public sector units and go for self-management.

BK: Exactly. Restructuring the public sector, dismantling the big monopolies, and turning them into medium and small scale units which could operate within the framework of a coordinated public sector but with certain independence and also splitting it horizontally and bringing certain parts of the public sector under the control of the local governments, for example. Creating a public sector at different levels of public control.

SC: That means you are basically opposed to the growth of monopoly capital in the Soviet Union. You want privatisation of only the small scale sector?

BK: Yes. We want either privatisation of the small-scale enterprises or the growth of new enterprises from below: if somebody wants to create a new enterprise with new capital—private, cooperative whatever—create new jobs, produce new products thus adding something to the output, to the number of the goods and the jobs in the market, that should be encouraged. This is not encouraged by the regime which exists today.

SC: What is your attitude to Marxism as such? Are you for creative Marxist development?

BK: If you mean myself, I am a Marxist. But, of course, the Party of Labour is not going to be a Marxist party in the sense that it won't be any obligatory ideological formula and it is never good for Marxism to be an obligatory ideological formula. You just can't have 15 million Marxists. That's just history.

Of course, the Party of Labour, I suppose, is going to include different trends. The Socialist Party also never insists of being a Marxist party although the path of analysis on which its activities were based was, I think, mostly Marxist.

SC: I want to know your evaluation of the August events.

BK: Well, it was a great performance in the sense that...

SC: What about the mass upsurge?

BK: There was no mass upsurge. Listen, an usual demonstration in summer in Moscow comprises 200,000 people.. that is an ordinary event in June for Yeltsin and his people.

Now during the August events the maximum scale of mobilisation was about 20,000. Not only because the people were afraid but also because the great majority of the people including the ones who participated in the earlier demonstrations, first of all, were very apathetic and, secondly, didn't see any real difference between the Geh-Kah-Cheh-Peh (that is, the Russian abbreviation for the State Committee for Emergency) and Yeltsin because they were saying exactly the same things.

SC: But bringing out tanks on the streets of Moscow...

BK: No, the people were not afraid of the tanks. First of all, the guns were not loaded, there was no ammunition, even the officers had no cartridges in their pistols.

SC: Why did they do it then?

BK: Well, it seems like a kind of cover for the real coup d'etat which happened successfully. The whole thing was a kind of great performance.

SC: Do you then think that the Geh-Kah-Cheh-Peh was acting at the behest of Yeltsin?

BK: No, they were just manipulated and cheated as everybody in this country. So they were promised something and then they started to do something and then it so happened that they were betrayed by Gorbachev and by Yeltsin who were originally supposed to be their supporters.

SC: Then whatever you are saying does it mean that everything was manipulated from outside?

BK: No, no, it was not manipulated from outside, it was manipulated from inside.

SC: But Yeltsin and his friends could not have acted without coordination with the West.

BK: Well, I am not sure. Because the Western reaction was very interesting. The West was very surprised and on the first day Bush in his first reaction failed to condemn the Geh-Kah-Cheh-Peh. Why?

SC: Initially Bush was highly restrained in his reaction.

BK: Yes, Because initially he thought that it was really serious. He felt he would have to deal with these people; so he didn't condemn them.

SC: So that rules out the possibility of direct Western involvement in the whole operation.

BK: Yes. What happened was exactly the opposite. When Gorbachev realised that the West was not going to give money and when Yeltsin realised that without Gorbachev—in case he just kicks out Gorbachev—the West would be a bit reluctant to support him, they both needed some kind of event to attract Western sympathy and show the Western powers that they must seriously support, must give them something more real. Otherwise, certain things could happen.

In a way that was also the means of influencing Western decision-making.

SC: But don't you agree that there was, at least in a limited sense, some kind of spontaneous movement on the part of the people?

BK: Certainly not.

SC: What was the attitude of the workers? Were they indifferent?

BK: Absolutely indifferent and hostile to both sides.

SC: So who were there before the White House? Only intellectuals?

BK: Well, some of the political activists including some of the Socialist activists went there (near the White House) mostly because they thought that it was necessary to show up.

SC: I have spoken to some people on the events of those three days and they said they had some kind of premonition of a return to the Stalinist past.

BK: Well, there was Anatoly Baranov, a famous journalist, leader of the Socialist Party, who went to the White House and addressed the demonstrators saying: "Comrades, we came here to defend our enemies."

SC: You were also there?

BK: I was in Sweden on August 20. I came back to Moscow on the 23rd.

SC: As far as Baranov is concerned, was he critical of Yeltsin and at the same time supportive of the democratic movement against the coup?

BK: No, he said that both sides were scoundrels and hypocrites. After all, for technical record we had to stand on the side of the White House but in fact they are both criminals.

The point is that we had a lot of Deputies of the Moscow Soviet. Most of the people were involved in guarding and defending this building. And some went to the White House also for seeing what was happening.

Yeltsin's call for a general strike failed to attract a single enterprise to go on strike in Moscow.

SC: I see, now tell me, when you make a contrast with the past—the Stalin period or the Brezhnev period—don't you think that there has been a sea-change in the mentality of the people in terms of the democratic ideas that have got rooted in their minds?

BK: I think it is very limited. The further you go, the more you feel how limited the change is.

SC: What I wanted to ask you is that whether you feel that conditions now exist for the development of a real socialist movement based on democratic values?

BK: There are. But also very limited. I feel that formation of certain market structures in the country are ironically very important for the creation of a democratic labour movement and socialist movement. Because people have to face certain challenges, certain realities and socialism is not an alternative to Stalinism but it is itself an alternative to capitalism and the capitalist market. Unless people face some experience of capitalism and the capitalist market, it will be hard to mobilise and organise the people for socialism as there is no objective basis for organising the alternative. So the experience we are having right now is positive for the self-organisation of the workers, for example.

The situation has definitely changed now. The workers suddenly realised the real threat and started to organise. This threat was not there before the workers a year ago.

Now we are concerned over the threat to democracy. First of all, Yeltsin abolished most of the powers of the Moscow Soviet. That was the Decree 96 which has abolished most of the powers of the local Soviet.

SC: And who has been given those powers?

BK: The Mayor's office. The powers include most of the ways of controlling the budget, police, nominations, property, etc. Of course the very fact of the liquidation of the Communist Party and its press and so on was anything but democratic. Because whether you like the party or not, there should be certain democratic rules within which you have to operate. And if you want to liquidate a party it should be on the basis of a court case or at least a parliamentary case, not a decree. That's very much a kind of robbery rather than a political decision because one of the reasons why the Communist Party was liquidated was that it was rich, very rich and that's why it became attractive as an object of robbery.

SC: I asked one of the leaders of the Marxist Platform why not a single member of the CPSU resisted the placing of the CPSU headquarters under lock and key. I was told that this happened because "we didn't get any directive from the leadership". That means you cannot spontaneously act without the directive of the leadership! If this is the situation it is the exact product of a totalitarian regime.

BK: Yes, in that sense the party deserved this fate. Absolutely. The party deserved this fate, but anyway it was not democratic.

SC: It could have been done through voting in Parliament.

BK: Of course, it could have been voted in Parliament. Well, there were plenty of ways of doing it. But in fact it was specially done in this way to show to everybody that if you are dangerous you could be eliminated by one decree without any problem.

Now, you know that we have special powers for the President (of the Russian Federation), a decision not to have any elections for one year and...

SC: The President of the Union....?

BK: The President of the Russian Federation has announced that there won't be elections of any kind for one year in Russia. But the fear is that this is just the beginning. There won't be elections even later. So in general we are facing a very serious question and, I think, in a way some form of an authoritarian regime is emerging. It has already emerged.

SC: Because of the economic conditions?

BK: No, no. This kind of regime is not going to improve the economic situation. And the government is not interested in improving the economic situation. I mean the balance of forces is such that the new authoritarian regime is succeeding to eliminate the main obstacles towards its development.

Also the concrete economic programmes of the government cannot be realised by democratic ways, democratic means, you see. So it's not a problem of the economic crisis, it's the problem of the economic programme of the government. It is about lowering the living standards of the people; about dismantling the public sector which is the only working section of the economy, nevertheless; about dividing the public property between the few top-ranking bureaucrats and their clients. Of course, this programme is going to face enormous resistance and will be extremely unpopular.

SC: You mean the programme of defreezing prices and all that.

BK. Yes, all those measures. All that is extremely unpopular. So that's why it's nothing strange that the government needs authoritarian structures to get this programme realised.

SC: But at the same time, I have been here from 1974 to 1978 and seen the way in which the totalitarian system functioned. The people were totally apathetic to any social awareness, to involvement in any social activity, a total alienation of the people from society had taken place. But after the advent of democracy that alienation was removed.

BK: No, it wasn't.

SC: You don't think so?

BK: For a great majority of the people it wasn't. There were some periods when people felt more or less...

SC: Do the people feel that there would be a throwback into the past?

BK: No. The people feel that they are completely alienated from the decision-making. Now you speak to the people in the streets and you will find them frustrated, apathetic, they feel that nobody cares about them.

SC: But they are speaking out.

BK: No, they are not. They are very much afraid of speaking out because of the new regime.

SC: Is it mainly among the workers?

BK: Well, not only among the workers, among the intellecuals as well. Now more than under Brezhnev.

Now you see that room (pointing to the adjoining room in the Moscow Soviet): it is the office room of what is known as the Denunication Committee. You just speak to the people in that room. For some time they were getting 300 to 400 denuciations a day.

SC: You mean complaints?

BK: Yes, complaints against people who should be arrested, sacked, etc. for being critical of the regime.

SC: Complaints from people who are for the present regime against those opposing it?

BK: Yes.

SC: A kind of witch-hunt?

BK: Yes, of course.

SC: But then no Communist was lynched on the streets or persecuted that way?

BK: Nobody was lynched on the streets because people had no reason to hate the mass of the Communists. They didn't like the Communist Party...

SC: But people like Victor Grishin, for example, after what he has done to Moscow?

BK: Of course. But nobdoy knows where he is. Probably he could have been lynched. But if someone like Popov walks through the streets of Moscow now he has more chance of being lynched than say Grishin who has already been forgotten.

People who work in this Committee call themselves as members of the McCarthy Committee.

SC: Let me digress a bit. Where would you place Gorbachev. I don't think he has totally given up his idea of a socialist choice.

BK: I don't think he ever had such an idea. If you remember he was the first to devise those ideas—later on taken over by the Right-wing—about return to the road of civilisation and so on and so forth. And...

SC: When you say Right-wingers you mean Yeltsin and company? Because for sometime they were described as Left-wingers in the Soviet context.

BK: For sometime they manipulated the words Left and Right. But if you just see the newspapers now you will find that they all write that the real danger comes from the Left and radicals, the neo-socialists and the Communists.

SC: You were saying that Gorbachev used certain ideas which were later picked up by the Right-wingers.

BK: Those were picked up by Yeltsin on account of political rivalry—words such as European home, etc.—

then Gorbachev changed his tune and began to speak about the 'socialist choice', etc. He used the term 'socialist choice' for about eight months and then dropped and changed it.

So he is basically hundred per cent pragmatist. He would pick up any idea for personal gains. This is the kind of psychology of the leadership of the country in general. This is another product of the regime by the way. This sort of leaders that the regime developed could pick up any terminology, any ideology, you see.

SC: What do you think about the economic situation? How do you cross the hump? Yeltsin says things will start improving after autumn next year. But what is your general assessment? How do you propose to tackle the problem?

BK: The policies of the present government can do nothing but to increase the crisis. But more than that I have a lot of reasons to suspect that the government wants to deepen the crisis.

SC: Why?

BK: Because the crisis is being used as a tool for distribution of power and property and incomes.

SC: And also to extract aid from the West?

BK: Also that too, That shows that there are no objective reasons to try to come out of the crisis soon before they reach all the social targets.

So in a way their whole conscious approach is to get deeper into the crisis.

SC: That is also the objective of the mafia.

BK: Yes, of course. But the mafia is also closely linked to the government. And thus it is really hard to say who is increasing the tensions, the mafia or the government.

SC: But in the process the country would be absolutely ruined.

BK: Yes, that is true. But then there is still something to rob in the country even today. So it is a very barbaric way of self-colonisation, exploiting your own country. As if the ruling elite is a colonising force. But then it is also acting as a very incompetent colonising force, you see. It is thus ruining the country instead of imparting the stimulus for development.

But if you speak of the positive aspects, we must refer to the radical version of the new deal. The new deal is the only correct attitude in the sense that there was no crisis faced by any country in the world except the Great Depression of the thirties which could be really comparable to what is happening here.

Therefore, the Great Depression can give us certain lessons because that was really a deep crisis, specially in America.

So what we say is that the country needs something like the new deal but with more role for the public sector to play. That is the realtively radical version of the new deal: the public sector must be restructured and used as a locomotive to pull the economy out of the recession. That means that there should be some accumulation of capital in the main fields, the main sectors which are going to be the priority sectors to pull the economy out of the crisis, to ensure real economic growth. So we have to use the administrative ways of making the economy work. But the main thing is to concentrate real capital in the hands of the public sector.

SC: But these administrative ways could again be a throwback into the command administrative system.

BK: I am sure they would be. Because any government now would not be able to resolve the crisis with pure economic measures. And the present government is already using a lot of administrative measures and would use more. That's not because they like or dislike them but because the choice is not whether to use administrative measures or not, but which and how.

What is needed is a kind of combination of administrative and economic measures in the new deal. But the administrative measures could be fruitful only if you have a responsible and democratically based government.

Once again coming back to the new deal experiment, these measures could be acceptable only if they are based on democratic decision-making from below. We think that there should also be an important grassroots mobilisation which could limit the level of administrative involvement in the regulation of the economy. Because otherwise you have to go for tough steps which are both inefficient and undemocratic.

SC: Now that you don't have any party as such and Yeltsin has not thought of building a movement or a party while Gorbachev is totally inactive, do you think there is a future for groups like your party?

BK: Well, you see, we are now becoming one of the major factors in the political map of the country. Because, for example, the last public rally organised by the Confederation of Moscow Trade Unions on October 23—that is, trade unions and the Party of Labour—protesting against the government policies on wages and unemployment, etc. collected about 50,000 people. This was the biggest demonstration of Moscow trade unions. We were able to bring plenty of people. Why? Because I think people suddenly felt that there was somebody who really cared for their daily problems. Not just abstract slogans or general ideologies but their real problems.

Now one of the ironies of the situation is that the faster we grow the more we are becoming targets for repression or actions against us.

Just now there is a campaign in the press against us: there was an attempt to kill one of our deputies and he narrowly escaped, there were threats. The press branded us as the fifth column of the Communists and so on—all that stuff. All this creates a kind of psychological climate for repression.

But on the other hand, the government doesn't feel strong enough to use open repression. And probably will not be strong enough to do so.

SC: By the way, the Communists are also regrouping.

BK: Yes, I know there are two or three groups engaged in the process.

SC: Are you going to have some coordination with them?

BK: Well, it all depends on the type of organisation they are going to build.

SC: How far do you think the Indian experiment of working in mixed economy has relevance in the Soviet Union? Perhaps we need to have more interaction especially among economists.

BK: I also think so. The economists in our country are mostly Western-oriented.

SC: Yavlinsky is going to Harvard. Why couldnt he come to India? That would have been much more fruitful.

BK: No, I don't think so because in Harvard they pay him quite a lot of pocket money while in New Delhi that's probably harder.

Well, I could tell you that there is no way of bringing

Western remedies as this is not a Western-style capitalist economy. Quite a lot of stuff which is serious in Western terms is irrelevant in our case. I was the first among social science scholars who tried to attract the attention of our political community to the Third World problems saying that we are much closer to the Third World than to the West and, therefore, we need to study the Third World probably more attentively and so on.

I think that the Indian experience is important for us for two reasons: one, of course, is that India is a country with an important public sector which, whatever you may say about its performance, was essential for the development of India as a more or less stable economy compared to the record of some other countries which in some ways provide a more dynamic model and in other ways are unstable. So, it is a very important stabilising factor as far as I could understand.

Secondly, India is also a rare case of a stable democracy within a very difficult society which is in many respects comparable to our society—it is multicultural, multireligius and nevertheless, the country manages to keep intact its basic democratic structures.

And by the way it is, I think, interconnected: the stability of economic development which is guaranteed by the important public sector, and the stability of the country to preserve the democratic rules of the game. I think these two factors are necessarily interconnected. In that sense I think undermining the public sector in India is a dangerous political tendency because even with the drawbacks of the public sector in its bureaucratised form it has certain important roles to play though I think what the importance of the Soviet experience could be to the Indian Left is that the public sector needs restructuring, it needs participative management and decentralisation, that is, subordination to different laws of democratic decision-making inside and outside the enterprise including the local governments concerned. That could make it really decisive in national development. That is what we desperately need and what we failed to get from *perestroika*.

SC: After the collapse of the Soviet experiment there is a feeling that this is a blow to the Third World. What do you have to say to that in the context of the Left in India?

BK: Speaking about international contacts I think that now we are entering a period where we have to reshape the Left or shape the new Left not only in this country but in the international scale. As far as the Party of Labour is concerned, we are interested in developing links with the Left in the Third World countries and we are interested in developing links with different kinds of Left-wing parties, the different currents and trends, though I think the problem of shaping the new identity of the Left, the formation of new parties and movements is not only for Eastern Europe, in a way it is an international problem. We are very much reconstructing the existing parties and structures. But it would be very important to have connections with...

SC: All sections of the Left?

BK: Well, I would say different sections of the Left, not all because the world 'all' is an all-embracing term. It would mean that all, including the Stalinists and Maoists, would have to be approached.

SC: Stalinists are strong, very strong in India. But at the same time people like us are also not to be totally ignored.

BK: Well, it just means that we are not going to base our links on contacts with the Stalinists. The point is just the opposite. We are interested in the democratic Left, not with the Stalinist and Maoist Left.

SC: Including the Socialists?

BK: Well, we represent the socialist Left.

SC: No, we in India have a Socialist segment in the Left, a segment that is called Socialist like there is the Communist segment in the Left.

BK: That's why I don't say all sections becuase I am not sure whether it is possible to include, for example, the Stalinists in this dialogue also because they are not capable of participating in this process of self-transformation, they do not want to be transformed. So that's why I said different sections of the Left. First of all, the socialist Left, the labour-oriented democratic Left and the radical groups and forces which are kind of what could be called responsible revolutionaries, you see.

And I think we have plenty of things to learn from the Third World Left especially because in these countries the Left face certain problems which we are just now starting to face, for example, the problem of Western domination, the problem of foreign captial which was never our major problem, as you know.

SC: Now lastly one point: very briefly, could you say something about the nationality problem and how you want to tackle it?

BK: The nationality problem is traditionally one of the hardest problems for the Left. The Left always has problems with the nationality question because it is not a class issue. We have a principle which can be formulated this way: the democratic rights are the main rights; the national rights must be respected and realised but not through the abolition of the democratic rights, only through the framework of democratic practices. For example, if you want that the national rights of certain populations to be protected they should not be protected at the expense of the abolition of certain democratic practices which should be universal for everybody. That is one point.

Secondly, of course we support the right of self-determination but we insist that it could be realised only through the democratic processes. Self-determination through the democratic processes, through referendum, through votes and not through violence...

SC: But what is happening in Chechen-Ingushetia?

BK: That's why we support Chechen-Ingushetia against the Russian Government. That's exactly the case where you can say well, look they voted, they elected a lawful government, they have expressed their will. And now we have to accept that and if the Russian Government does not accept that then there is no guarantee that the government is going to accept the results of the vote in Russia. That's why we are definitely on their side.

SC: In conclusion, can you react very briefly to the lack of faith among the people. This is what I have found in my talks with different sections of the people. How would you overcome this very depressing factor—*bez vierie*?

BK: I think the people do not have to believe in somebody else. They have to act and start believing in themselves. That's the only way.

SC: Do you think that there is some element of hope?

BK: Well, there are always reasons for hope. ■

Cambodian Peace Process

B.B. PRADHAN

The Cambodian peace agreement, signed in Paris on October 24, 1991 by 19 nations, has formally ended the 21 year war and launched an unprecedented UN operation to arrange free elections in Cambodia. This has brought hope to the Cambodian people and all peace lovers throughout the world that gunfire will no longer be heard in the beautiful land of Angkor and that people's blood will not again be shed.

The Cambodians have not experienced peace for two decades. First, it was saturation bombing from American B-52 bombers seeking to destroy Vietcong camps during the Vietnam war. That ended with the overthrow of Prince Norodom Sihanouk and installation of Lon Nol in Cambodia.

In 1975 the Khmer Rouge captured power and led a bloody and mysterious revolutionary movement while isolating Cambodia from the world community. Pol Pot and his Khmer Rouge engineered forced separation of families, created slave labourers, carried out widespread torture and organised mass killing of more than one million people. Such was the tragedy and horror that Cambodia eventually came to be known as the 'killing fields'.

The Khmer Rouge were driven out by the Vietnamese on Christmas Day, 1978. They installed the Heng Samrin Government with their two lakh military troops. The Vietnamese invasion was not intended for the deliverance of the Cambodian people, but to replace the anti-Vietnamese Khmer Rouge leadership. So this did not end Cambodia's suffering; instead began a protected civil war, and that has been going on for more than 12 years.

The Cambodian civil war has been waged by four factions: the two non-communist and the Khmer Rouge who form the coalition government, led by Prince Sihanouk, Son San and Pol Pot respectively. Each group was supported by regional powers and a superpower. The non-communist factions receive support from China, the ASEAN and the United States. The Khmer Rouge receive arms from China. The fourth faction heading the Phnom Penh Government (of Heng Samrin and Hun Sen) was dependent on Vietnam for political, economic and military support. The outsiders initially found it beneficial in their national interest to continue the struggle in Cambodia but later they felt it would be more useful to end it. Gradually with each the balance of interest shifted towards terminating the conflict and it has now came to be in the interest of all that peace be established.

The author is a Lecturer in Political Science, S.N.D.T. College of Arts and S.C.B. College of Commerce, Bombay. He has recently published a book, Superpower and Non-Alignment in Third World Conflicts: A Study of Kampuchea.

The demise of the Cold War, and the Sino-Soviet reapproachment had an impact on the attitudes of the three actors—China, Vietnam, the USSR—as well as the various Khmer factions towards one another. In March 1985 Mikhail Kapitsa, the Soviet Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, toured Asia and repeated in Beijing in particular that Moscow sought to be a peace broker in South-East Asia.

On August 16, 1985 the Indo-Chinese Foreign Ministers agreed in their conference to withdraw the Vietnamese troops from Kampuchea in 1990, and the Phnom Penh Government was ready to talk with various groups and individuals for national reconciliation on the basis of the elimination of the Pol Pot clique. On September 2, 1985 it was announced on Khmer Rouge Radio that Son San was to replace Pol Pot as the supreme commander of the national army of Democratic Kampuchea and this enabled the various factions to engage in further talks.

◆

THE historic meeting between Gorbachev and Deng Xiaoping in May 1989 resulted in normalisation of relations between the two countries. That meeting underlined the importance of the Cambodian conflict. Both sides agreed on the formula of a peaceful, neutral and non-aligned Kampuchea, withdrawal of Vietnamese troops under international supervision. They condemned the civil war, and they committed themselves to abide by the result of the ensuing general elections. What is more, they agreed to reduce their military assistance to all the Cambodian factions. The Soviet Union drastically cut aid to Vietnam. Under enormous economic and international pressure Vietnam withdraw its military forces from Cambodia in 1989.

The US-Soviet and Sino-Soviet rapproachment and normalisation were accompanied by intense diplomatic initiative on Cambodia. In the winter of 1986-1987, a retired French diplomat, Jean-Jacques Galbru, met Prime Minister Hun Sen in Phnom Penh and convinced him to negotiate with Prince Sihanouk and in 1987 they met in France. The ASEAN effort, by Indonesia and Thailand in particular, led to the Jakarta Informal Meeting (JIM) in July 1988. For the first time four factions including the Khmer Rouge and the Vietnamese met and all of them except the Khmer Rougue submitted peace proposals. The JIM II in 1989 and JIM III in 1990 underscored the difficulties of bringing the parties in the conflict to the negotiation table.

In 1988 the United Nations passed a resolution to hold an International Conference on Cambodia in Paris. In August 1989 the various factions met in Paris for a monthlong conference. All sides agreed to the role of the UN to monitor (1) the withdrawal of all Vietnamese forces; (2) a ceasefire; (3) stopping of all external military support; (4) the creation of an interim administration; (5) the supervision of free elections. But the conference failed because the warring factions wanted to exclude each other from the interim government during the UN operation. The Chinese and the Khmer Rouge wanted to see the compelte dismantling of the Phnom Penh Government with the United Nations running the country during the interim period. In contrast, Vietnam, the Soviet Union and the Phnom Penh Government wanted the Hun Sen administration to remain intact during the transition period with a UN team supervising the transition. At the same time the Sihanouk faction called for a UN role with a quadripartite interim government. Authority would be divided equally between the three resistance factions and the Hun sen Government, it was suggested. Both Phnom Penh and the Khmer Rougue rejected sharing of power with each other.

On June 4, 1990 Japan invited the four factions to hold talks in Tokyo. Except the Khmer Rouge the others participated and agreed that a Supreme National Council representing all the factions should take Cambodia's seat at the UN.

◆

IN November 1989, after the failure of the Paris Conference, Australian Foreign Minister Evans proposed the establishment of a UN-supervised interim administration as a way of removing the key obstacles to a political settlement. His proposals emphasised the following elements:

— a UN peace keeping force that would be reponsible for implementing a ceasefire in cantonments, disarming forces, destroying military stockpiles and monitoring the ceasefire;
— internationally supervised elections to elect a constituent assembly;
— an internationally supervised end to external sanctuaries and external assistance for military purposes to all parties;
— massive international programme of relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction in Cambodia;
— permitting civilians in all camps associated with the resistance factions to have freedom of movement to return to their place of origin or to accompany their faction back into Cambodia.

This proposal was aimed at breaking the logjam on the interim political arrangement, and the UN's significant role in governing Cambodia between the time an agreement is reached and the emergence of a new Cambodian Government.

In June 1990 the Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister, Xu Dunxin, met the Vietnamese Foreign Minister, Nguyen Co Thach, in Hanoi for four day talks on the issue of peace in Cambodia. It was the seniormost formal contact between China and Hanoi since 1979. This scenario offered hope since finding a solution to the Chinese-Vietnamese hostilities was central to the problem of finding a solution to the civil war in Cambodia.

James Baker, the US Secretary of State, announced in July 1990 that the US would no longer support the seating of the rebel National Government of Cambodia at the UN. He also announced an American plan to begin dialogue with Vietnam on the issue of Cambodia. The US also started giving humanitarian aid to the area held by the Hun Sen Government.

On August 28, 1990, exactly one year after the Paris conference, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council announced an agreement on a framework of political settlement for Cambodia. That included a UN Transitional Authority for Cambodia (UNTAC) to oversee the elections and a Supreme National Council (SNC) to run the country in the transitional period. This decision was followed by an agreement on September 10, 1990 by the warring factions to form a Supreme National Council (SNC) to maintain and represent Cambodian sovereignty during an unspecified period of transition.

◆

IN December 1990 the Paris International Conference on Cambodia reached on agreement on settlement of the Cambodian problem. But the Phnom Penh Government rejected the central component the plan which involved the UN supervision of Phnom Penh ministries, including defence and foreign affairs, and the disarming of all factions.

In an attempt to review the deadlocked UN peace plan, the Indonesian Foreign Minister and the French Foreign Minister's delegate visited Vietnam in early February 1991 to pursuade the Vietnamese to exert pressure on Phnom Penh to accept the UN peace plan but failed.

The United States on January 1991 suspended its aid to the two non-communist factions which was US $ 20,000,000 as humanitarian and non-lethal military aid. The USA also outlined a plan for normalisation of US-Vietnam relations under which any relation was fully conditional on Vietnamese acceptance of the stalled UN peace plan for Cambodia.

On March 7, 1991 the Chinese Foreign Minister's spokesman indicated that China had resumed supply of arms to the Khmer Rouge which it had stopped in November 1990. Richard Solomon, the US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and the Pacific, and his Soviet counterpart, the Deputy Foreign Minister, Igor Rogachev, visited China and expressed their concern about China's apparent volte-face over military assistance to the Khmer Rouge.

The call for a voluntary temporary ceasefire was issued on April 22, 1991 by Indonesia and France, the co-chairmen of the Paris International Conference on Cambodia, and the UN Secretary-General, Perez de Cueller. The State of Cambodia accepted the appeal on April 24 and two days later the rebel National Government of Cambodia announced that it was happy to accept the appeal. At the same time the four factions also backed the idea of fresh talks.

The warring factions of Prince Sihanouk, Khieu Samphan, Son San and Hun Sen, and also the UN Secretary for Asia, Rafeeudin Ahmed, and officials of France and Indonesia who co-chair the Paris Conference on Cambodia met in July 1991 in Beijing. This meeting consolidated the atmosphere of mutual trust among the factions. The SNC, which was set up, unanimously appealed to the UN to send its mission to Cambodia to supervise the voluntary ceasefire and the halt of military aid.

This shows that the major obstacles in the way of peace in Cambodia were at times the superpowers and at times the regional powers. Now by signing the peace agreement in Paris the centre of gravity in the peace process has shifted out of the international arena to Cambodia itself. For the first time whether there is to be peace or more war largely depends on what happens inside the country. The central problem now is governance and within this the threat posed by incipient anarchy. ■

N.C.'s Commentary

(Continued from page 2)

you disapprove a government-sponsored history, would you leave the job to the private sector, to the market? In other words, the choice is between an establishment-backed history or a commercially-produced history. Such a proposition is untenable. What is necessary and possible is that distinguished scholars with reputation for integrity can be collected together by an educational or cultural institution of eminence, and assigned to produce history books which the students can read with profit—voluntarily and not as an official command. This is how the world renowned series of Oxford and Cambridge history volumes have been produced. Textbooks made to government order may be learned, projecting valuable insights. But these will be handicapped because in the public eye these will hardly command respect for objectivity.

The realities of current-day politics cannot but have their imprint on such a subject as the interpretation of the past. The prevailing polarisation makes it abundantly clear that a number of diverse viewpoints are bound to impinge on historical scholarship. Not only between the BJP school and the Marxist, there is also the regional approach whether it is in Tamil Nadu or in Maharashtra or in the North-East. To expect that everybody will accept a common denominator for writing history would be naive or may be shot down as an authoritarian approach. No doubt in a situation like this, the problem of writing a history textbook is formidable. But this can hardly be overcome by a Ministerial mandate issued to a chosen few among historians, however high in scholarly reputation. If anything, such a move will make things worse. ■

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Mainstream

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POLITICAL NOTEBOOK

Learning from Larry

There seems to be some sort of a mini-euphoria over Senator Larry Pressler's visit to New Delhi and Islamabad. His testimonial that he could not think of India falling within the mischief of surreptitiously developing a nuclear weapons programme is being advertised here as an indication of a refreshing change in the US stance His statement that he found no valid reasons to extend the Pressler Amendment (linking aid to nuclear weapons development programme) to India no doubt signifies a new approach to the question taken by prominent persons in the US Congress. However, it would be a costly error if we adopt a naive attitude on the subject and begin to think that henceforth Washington would desist from exerting pressure on New Delhi to sign the nuclear non-profileration treaty (NPT).

For one thing, Larry Pressler is not a member of the US Administration which has been actively pressing all countries, including China and India, to accept the NPT. Secondly, since India is not a US ally like Israel (that is much closer to Washington than Islamabad) the White House will not stop at anything to ensure that this country loses its option to use nuclear weapons in an extraordinary situation. The way in which Beijing's arms have been twisted to sign the NPT should be an eye-opener to all (Now China is reportedly prepared to make major concessions to the US to avert a trade war that the latter is intending to launch.) In fact there is little doubt that the five permanent members of the UN Security Council are jointly moving to force the "recalcitrant" states to fall in line on the issue (even though Israel is not being subjected to the kind of pressure that has been brought to bear upon Pakistan).

It is in this backdrop that one must seriously question the justification of influential segments in India falling prey to the anti-Pak campaign of personalities like Senator Pressler. Why should we permit a superpower to use its clout to browbeat a developing country on the subject, no matter whatever the latter's attitude towards India? It is necessary for us to overcome our petty predilections which foreigners, especially the Westerners, frequently exploit with effortless ease. What is essential is to initiate a comprehensive dialogue with neighbours like Pakistan with the objective of constructing from the scratch an edifice of trust whereby conflicts and use of nuclear weaponry by either side would become redundant in the long run. A recent visit to Pakistan by a group of leading Indian intellectuals and journalists has helped them to appreciate that the realisation of such an eventuality is very much within the realm of possibility. The dialogue must extend to China as well on the nuclear question in particular. A narrow view, hardened by longstanding prejudices, needs to be eschewed at the earliest.

If such a regional arrangement for

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arresting the growth of nuclear weapons in this part of the globe takes shape through the infusion of trust, that would reinforce our capacity—that is, of each one of the states in this zone—to stand upto Western bullying. There is no need to wait for the emergence of a Camp David type meeting between India and Pakistan under US auspices, as proposed by Pressler (and rejected by our Prime Minister) We ourselves can take a tangible step in that direction without depending on a generous Western mediator. For that, of course, we shall have to discard our myopic vision that also hampers growth and enrichment of each of the countries in South Asia.

In a rapidly changing world such a step will be in full conformity with the global trend of civilised integration cutting across all artificial barriers But do we have the mature statesmanship of a Jawaharlal Nehru to evolve such a long-term view?

The Western powers, which are time and again lecturing to us of the virtues of the Western world and the threat inherent in nuclear weapons falling into the hands of Asians, conveniently forget that it was the White man who had first dropped the atom bomb on an Asian nation killing countless innocent men and women in the ghastly tragedy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki over fortysix years ago

Senator Larry Pressler's visit must spur us to think anew on all such vital issues

January 15 *S.C.*

Punjab Poll and National Integration

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

On the last day of the last year, the Prime Minister of India reiterated that the long-postponed elections in Punjab would have to be held, as promised, by February 15, otherwise the credibility of his government would be thoroughly eroded

This emphasis laid by Narasimha Rao before the National Integration Council meeting is no doubt welcome and bears the implication of the unwisdom of the cancellation of the Punjab poll at the eleventh hour in June last. It is often not realised outside Punjab the importance of holding elections there as a tangible antidote to the rule of the gun—both of the armed militants and of the security forces. On the one hand, the holding of elections neutralises to a large measure one of the points of the militants' campaign that New Delhi trusts no Punjabi and wants to hold Punjab down by the sheer might of the armed forces. On the other hand, an elected government in Punjab, however non-conformist and critical of the Centre, could act as a cushion or a baffle wall which will be responsible for the handling of armed militancy or extremist politics in the State In this sense, this brings out that decentralisation offers greater chances for reinforcing national integration than the direct armed rule of the Centre.

As the Prime Minister himself anticipated, the spate of the militants' violence has been stepped up with the government's decision to go ahead with the elections to the Punjab State Assembly. This is because the Khalistanis who operate at the behest of the Pakistan authorities would not like a democratic order to function in this country, and as such would do everything possible to scuttle the Punjab poll, even to the point of terrorising the public to engineer the sabotaging of the proposed poll.

Not only the Pakistani agencies, but quite a few others, who have been engaged in violence poll, particularly the large number of anti-social elements who have been indulging in banditry under cover of the respectable alibi of political militancy. According to some estimates, there are about 150 groups today in Punjab who have taken to the gun, of whom not more than 15-20 are motivated by a cause, while the rest can be branded as criminal gangs taking advantage of the abnormal conditions to carry on their operations which range from smuggling and drug peddling to sheer looting. Obviously, these groups would try their utmost to spread terror to spoil the elections.

In simple terms, one may say that the only solution to this problem lies in going for determined police action In this context, the deployment of the Army in Punjab has become necessary to ensure free polling. Together with this, it is necessary for the government as also for the ruling party to come to some understanding with the more responsible sections of militants so that they could be brought round to contest the poll or at least to abstain from breaking it up.

Far too long, the Punjab crisis has been handled within the stereotype framework of the narrow interests of the party in power at the Centre and hands considered as a direct challenge to the fabric of the nation's integrity. It is true there are individuals and groups that have been concerned with the dangerous turn of events in Punjab as an assault on the nation's unity; but unfortunately, such an approach had little impact on the decision-making process at the Centre particularly in the last ten years. This point needs to be underlined over and over again because it is likely to impinge upon decisions at the political and governmental level in the crucial months ahead.

If we view the issue with a degree of objectivity, the onset of the crisis in Punjab could be discerned early in the eighties when Indira Gandhi returned to power. Her position and prestige at that time was such that she could have met some of the more reasonable demands of the Akali party and defused the crisis provided she and her colleagues had taken a long-range view of the crisis. However, the problem at the time was that within the Congress the feud between Darbara Singh who was then the Chief Minister of Punjab, and Giani Zail Singh then elevated to be the Union Home Minister, blocked any possibility of a settlement. While Darbara Singh was for outright political battle with the Akali party, Zail Singh moved to paralyse and disrupt the Akali party by promoting Sant Bhindranwale. And it has to be conceded that the Giani won in this internal feud, and Darbara Singh had to step down from Chief Ministership on Indira Gandhi's directive. Such a strategy of using an extremist faction to divide a political opponent has become the bane of our present-day politics; and it could be seen not only in Punjab but in other parts of the country as well.

This strategy of abetting Bhindrawale ended in disaster. His avowedly aggressive extremism turned out to be a Frankenstein for the Congress leadership so much so that a stage had come when the Army had to be called in to flush him out of the Golden Temple. The Operation Bluestar succeeded in liquidating Bhindranwale, but the desecration of this sanctum sanctorum injected a measure of alienation of the Sikh community from New Delhi to a degree which was unprecedented. It will be no exaggeration to say that this turned out to be the prime cause of Indira Gandhi's gruesome assassination five months later. The Sikh alienation was further accentuated by the ghastly pogrom in which thousands of innocent Sikhs were killed in Delhi and some other urban centres in north India.

The promise of a positive turn came when Rajiv Gandhi signed the accord with Sant Longowal, whose terms were expected to be the basis of an amicable settlement. This could have been reinforced by large-scale joint campaign all over Punjab by the two parties to the accord, thereby isolating the intransigent militants. However, such a follow-up was not undertaken, and instead, immediate elections to the State Assembly were announced. The elections saw the two parties to the accord ranged against each other, campaigning on their separate platforms with the result that the spirit of the accord itself evaporated, leaving no opportunity for generating mutual trust between the two major parties in Punjab—which alone at that time could perhaps have isolated the Sikh extremists, and activated the Sikh centrists.

Inevitably, the Akali Ministry under Barnala that followed, was bereft of the full support of the Akali party, while on the other hand, the Rajiv Government failed to implement the accord with Longowal. Even the promised transfer of Chandigarh was not honoured, apart from the other clauses of the accord. Consequently, the Barnala Ministry could not overcome the opposition of other sections of the Akali party. The denouement came with the dismissal of the Barnala Ministry by the Centre on the fatuous plea that it could not put down militant violence. The real reason for the oustr of the Barnala Ministry was the mistaken calculation that this would help the Congress-I in the impending Assembly elections in Haryana. The miscalculation was evident when the poll results showed the Congress debacle in Haryana, where Devi Lal emerged with a larger-than-life image.

A phase of blindfold drift ensued, during which the militants stepped up their attacks with overt support from across the frontier, from Pakistan, while the reinforced police action, both together, harassed the public. This was the period when violence became rampant—extortions, cold-blooded killings, fake encounters all these hitting at the normal life of large sections of the public.

After Rajiv, when V.P. Singh came to power, he began with an excellent gesture of goodwill as he

(Continued on page 32)

NEXT WEEK

Mainstream Republic Day Special will contain articles on important subjects of national concern by distinguished authors.

Need for a Secular, Centrist Alternative

SEEMA MUSTAFA

It does not need an astrologer to predict that 1992 promises to be as momentous, politically, as the preceding year. The semblance of stability is a mirage and any sudden move can rock the boat setting into motion a chain reaction which will affect all Centrist parties, groups and factions. Acutely aware of the uncertain political situation, the average politician is waiting in the wings, trying desperately to keep a finger in every political pie even as he keeps a close watch on individual leaders and events.

A new understanding between the Congress-I and the BJP will have its own repercussions on the political structure. There is no doubt that Prime minister P.V. Narasimha Rao has finally decided to use the BJP to keep his minority government afloat. The two parties, over the years, have been coming closer in terms of ideology, political approach and attitudes. Since the assassination of Indira Gandhi and the subsequent general election, it has become clear to even the sceptics that the RSS is not averse to bailing the Congress-I out of trouble as and when the need arises, for in its assessment the post-1980 Congress-I is ideologically closer to it than any other party. Recent statements by the RSS leaders on this are an indication that this Right-wing organisation does not see many ideological barriers coming in the way of a closer cooperation with the Congress-I.

The Prime Minister, it may then be argued, is only carrying the relationship to its logical end. Aware that the economic policies being pursued by his government will never have the approval of the Left and the socialists in the National Front, he is accommodating the BJP in the political arena to ensure support for himself and his government. There is barely any criticism from the Congress-I against the BJP. The party in power at the Centre turned a blind eye to the illegal notification issued by the UP Government acquiring land at and around the disputed shrine at Ayodhya. The Centre again refused to react to the BJP's *ekta yatra* and in fact Narasimha Rao called an all-party meeting on the eve of the *yatra* to discuss the issue. As he himself had no suggestions to offer, members came out saying that the Prime Minister had convened the meeting merely to give publicity to the *yatra*. Many in and out of government believe that Narasimha Rao has entered into a tacit agreement with the BJP on this issue. So long as the *yatra* does not pose a law and order problem for his government he will allow Murli Manohar Joshi his way and then oblige the BJP by arresting its members after Jammu.

There is no doubt that the Congress-I has decided against wielding even a soft stick on the issue of communalism. At a recent meeting of the National Integration Council, called to discuss the Punjab and Kashmir issues, not a single Congress-I leader spoke. The usual galaxy of Ministers and senior leaders were present but when an Opposition member wondered why none of them had thought it fit to speak on the issues concerning the nation the reply was: "We are Ministers." The Prime Minister spoke at length from a prepared text which, he admitted at the meeting, to be reading for the first time. And the major part of his speech was against Pakistan, the convenient scapegoat for a political leadership unwilling, for more reasons than one, to come to grips with the situation at home. In the process the BJP, insofar as the Congress-I Government was concerned, escaped unscathed. And perhaps that was the intention for not much can be said about the present communal situation in the country without reference to the BJP and its cadres.

Interestingly, when Narasimha Rao took over, the Left and even the National Front appeared kindly disposed towards him. They were going more by his age, and the end of dynastic rule than by any track record. The initial statements were subdued and even wary of criticising the government as senior leaders met the Prime Minister on several occasions to explore his bent of mind. But soon it became clear to all in the Left and the National Front that Narasimha Rao could not be influenced. That he was determined to pursue the course of reckless liberalisation, that he was more in tune with the BJP and would not temper his economic or political policies to keep the Leftists happy.

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IT was perhaps only natural that the IMF and

(Continued on page 35)

Smile of the Buddhist Sages

OCTAVIO PAZ

We are living at a particularly difficult time, a time when there is an intellectual vacuum in the world of political philosophy. The collapse of the great systems constructed in the last century is coinciding with the appearance throughout the world of political and economic institutions which constitute a new social group, a class which, for want of a more accurate term, we call "bureaucracy".

In some countries, this bureaucracy is identified with an ideology or a state. Elsewhere, if the political and technocratic bureaucracy plays a decisive role, as it does in Mexico for example, its power is far from being absolute. This new class is universal: it has invested and invaded the great capitalist enterprises of the West and Japan, and the political regimes of Eastern Europe, not to mention powerful institutions such as the CIA, and the governments of some developing countries.

The vacuum in political and social ideas is a result of twentiethcentury history. It is an aspect of the great crisis of modern post-industrial civilisation. Until the 1930s many people, including myself, thought that only the socialist revolution could resolve the contradictions in our societies. But since then we have seen the failure of the experiment which began with the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. It has been a social failure, because it has been unable to provide freedom and equality; it has been an economic failure because the wealth that was supposed to be created did not materialise. The only triumph was political or, rather, military.

The idea of revolution, however, has received a serious blow and has lost almost all its appeal, notably in the developed countries. Even in Mexico, where the intellectuals—the heirs of the clerics and courtiers—are singularly impervious to criticism, the Left has begun a process of ideological detoxification. But the disappearance of utopian ideology which is noticeable even in the USSR, through the constructive reforms of Mikhail Gorbachev, does not mean the birth of a new political philosophy. As far as social ideals and collective morality are concerned, there is a gaping void. Peoples and states are drifting.

The moral criticism of capitalism by Marx and the anarchists is still largely valid. Similarly, the liberal critique of despotism and state socialism, what Engels called "cartel socialism", is as relevant as ever. The same could be said of the critique of the iniquities of the modern world made by Christianity and other religions. But the foundations of the political ideologies which have motivated twentieth-century man—socialism, liberalism and others—have been relegated to the sidelines since the Second World War.

The author, a renowned Mexican poet and writer, won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1990. A former Ambassador of Mexico to India, he is also a recipient of the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding.

Today we are confronted with the perils of nuclear holocaust and environmental degradation, which threaten world peace and the very survival of the human race. Neither of these two scourges can be imputed to the injustices of capitalism or the evils of socialism: they both result from the very nature of modern societies. The bomb and the pollution of the planet are the result of technological progress and not of a particular ideology. Reality has reduced ideology to rubble.

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WITHOUT wishing to make prophecies, we can say that in this great historical vacuum democracy is the only regime which is still showing signs of life. But democracy is not a panacea. It is a form of conviviality, a system for preventing people from killing each other, for ensuring that the reins of government change hands peacefully, and for enabling heads of state to come to power via the ballot-box. Democracy teaches us to live together and nothing else. I hope that one day, a day that I shall perhaps never see since I am seventyfive years old, a new form of political thought will emerge and reconcile the liberal and the socialist traditions.

In the Mexican intellectual microcosm, all that can be done at present is blow away the dust and the cobwebs, open the windows and let in some light, maintain a critical approach and a healthy scepticism of easy solutions. Irony is one ingredient in criticism, but it is also born of disenchantment. We belong to a disenchanted generation. And we also lack something of imagination and compassion.

I have used the word irony in the sense in which it was used by the French artist Marcel Duchamp—an irony which goes beyond irony and cancels itself out by mocking itself. Irony is subjective, the reaction of the self to the stupid or criminal seriousness of the objective world. The ironical man laughs at others but also at himself: "meta-irony" consists in going further than the dialogue with the self, in mocking the self which mocks the world. If irony is cruel, meta-irony dissolves the cruelty.

Transposing these aesthetic ideas to morality and politics, I believe that the political writer should show

(Continued on page 30)

Extradition and Terrorism

SHAKUNTALA MAHAWAL

There have been indications lately that the Indian Government means business in combating the menace of terrorism. Though terrorism is a global concern, having lost two Prime Ministers at the hands of terrorists, India is most acutely aware of the gravity of the situation.

A good deal of terrorist activities are fanned, financed and directed from the foreign soil. New Delhi is rather keen to sign an extradition treaty with the United Kingdom so that some hardcore terrorists taking refuge there can be brought to India for a speedy trial. The British Government has assured its cooperation in fighting the menace which is affecting both the countries. The recently concluded visit of the British Secretary of State for Home, Kenneth Baker, therefore, assumes great significance in getting down to brasstacks. It may pave the way for the signing of the long awaited extradition treaty.

It was the late Rajiv Gandhi, who, during his official visit to Britain in October 1985, persuaded the government there to evolve an "effective mechanism" which would make it possible to extradite terrorists. Because of the differences between the two countries on crucial clauses, it has taken more than five years in giving a concrete shape to the mechanism of a bilateral treaty on extradition.

Extradition is the return of a fugitive criminal from the country where he is found to another where he is accused or has been convicted of an offence. It is an arrangement designed to prevent criminals from escaping justice by crossing national frontiers.

It is felt that international response to terrorism has so far been weak and ineffective. In this context, the maxim *aut punire aut dedere*, that is "extradite or punish", suggests that the offender must either be punished by the state of refuge or surrendered to the state which can or will punish him. It is easier to bring the criminal back to the home country than to carry the evidence to a foreign country.

Legal thinkers have, therefore, emphasised the need to extradite. Besides, no state can desire that its territory should become a safe haven for the malefactors of other countries, and as such it is obviously in its national interest to get rid of them without let or hindrance. Of course, with changing international equations many states resort to the contrary because of compulsions of realpolitik. Still, there has been a widespread tendency towards creating legally enforceable obligations through extradition treaties.

In keeping with the international trend, India should also enter into new treaties on the basis of reciprocity with as many countries as possible. Equally important is the need to review at the earliest our existing treaties.

Difficulties faced in cases from Tarasov to Teja to Sobhraj show that India is yet to enter into treaty relations with important countries in respect of extradition traffic. At the same time, international practice in this field is witnessing quick changes and it is, therefore, desirable that these changes should be incorporated into our extradition practice also.

After the enactment of the Extradition Act of 1962, it was expected that adequate attention would be paid to this task. But, strangely enough, the proposed treaty with Britain will be just the third bilateral extradition treaty which India will be signing since independence. The other two treaties were signed with Bhutan and Nepal.

The 40-odd pre-independence bilateral extradition treaties were all signed by the then British Indian Government. Most of them are about a century old. An analysis of these treaties which are still binding on India, reveals that their provisions have become obsolete.

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WITH the exception of the post-independence treaty with Nepal practically in all the extradition treaties to which India has been a party, there is a mandatory provision declaring that any person charged with the commission of political offences "shall not be surrendered". The Extradition Act of 1962 also makes this provision mandatory. This gives a

Dr Mahawal, a member of the Indian Information Service, is the Director, Press Information Bureau, Government of India. Her research topic for Ph.D. was "Extradition Treaties of India".

convenient handle to some countries to give desired interpretations to political offence, and refuse to surrender even hardened terrorists. The provision related to political offence, therefore, needs maximum attention in the proposed treaty with the United Kingdom. Baker's remarks that "extradition could not be sought on political grounds" are being interpreted as a hint at the mandatory provisions against the surrender of political offenders. It is hoped, New Delhi will insist on discretionary provisions.

There is no other aspect of the extradition law which has undergone such a metamorphosis as the principle and practice regarding political offenders. The French Revolution was the starting point for the revolt in the nineteenth century against despotism throughout Western Europe, it was then that the term "political crime" arose and countries began to grant asylum to foreigners exiled from their home country for the cause of liberty.

With democratic governments having taken over in most parts of the world and with the upsurge of terrorism in the last decade, it is pertinent to note that a number of countries are making certain exceptions to the safeguard for political offences. Modern international terrorism is very different in scale and character from anything known in the last century when political safeguard was first introduced in the international law. It more frequently involves threat to the safety of innocent people by hijacking aircrafts or kidnapping arbitrarily selected victims to extort political concessions such as release of prisoners in exchange for the lives of the hostages.

The general increase in international travel especially by air, and the relative ease with which national boundaries can now be crossed are other elements in the growth of international terrorism and the escape of the terrorists. Besides, the availability of modern weapons which enhance the striking power of small groups and the worldwide media coverage which highlights major terrorist incidents, give terrorists the "oxygen of publicity".

It is a measure of international recognition of these problems and of a readiness to cooperate in combating them that 107 countries, including India, signed the Tokyo Convention of 1963 on offences and certain other acts committed on board an aircraft. As a member of the Commonwealth, India has separate, simple provisions for extradition to other Commonwealth countries. There is a need to put further pressure through organisations like the NAM and the SAARC to evolve a uniform practice of extradition. These multilateral conventions could operate side by side with bilateral treaties.

The task of negotiating new and amended extradition treaties, bilateral as well as multilateral, is no doubt colossal, but it cannot be delayed any further.■

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Subsidy Reduction in IMF Oriented Strategies

V.N. VISWANATHAN

The IMF (International Monetary Fund) oriented policies of the Indian Government and politically charged issues like devaluation of the currency or deregulation of the industrial sector or even the pruning of the public sector and subsidies reduction became subjects of endless debate in the columns of *Mainstream* for the last six months. Meanwhile, the letter of intent to the IMF from the government was placed before Parliament. It was expected that the letter of intent of the government would reflect the specific commitments of the government to the IMF. Surprisingly, no specific commitment was imposed by the IMF as it happened for other Third World countries. It was left to the Government of India to decide the kind of budgetary discipline that is necessary to raise on a permanent basis India's capacity to export.

Thus, excess spending by the government and waste and monopoly pricing by the private sector will both have to end. The decisions that the Government takes in the next two months as it designs the budget (1992-93) will decide the fate of India. This calls for a fresh analysis of the impact of the IMF-oriented strategies that is going to affect the future of the Indian economy. Particularly those financial strategies that are going to affect the poorest sections of the Indian population.

The prevailing mood of flagging consensus behind economic reforms and the 'no challenge' posture by the Opposition parties in Parliament may fail to unearth the dangerous consequences of the IMF-oriented strategies. No doubt in the present situation, India had no alternative but to take a large loan from the IMF to stave off imminent default on its foreign debt servicing payments. Domestically also the government has to cut its expenditure.

In the next financial year it seems that the government may adopt two IMF-oriented financial strategies. The first one is to cut its excess spending which is in the form of mounting subsidies. Secondly, the government is poised to cut its insalubrious investment in loss-making public sector units (PSUs). These structural changes will entail some hardships. But such hardships must be equally shouldered by all the economic sectors in the country. In the absence of constructive criticism of the government's financial strategy only the poorer in India is going to be affected by these drastic measures.

Among the major national Opposition parties probably only the Left continues to oppose the IMF-oriented policies since the IMF first made its entry into the Indian consciousness in the recent past. Even for the Left there is a very practical limitation in opposing the IMF-related policies. That is because the core ideology of the Left—socialism—is being regarded with scepticism in the main body of political and economic debate worldwide. Incidentally, the IMF/World Bank designed economy in Britain (1980s), South Korea (1985), Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia made spectacular recoveries of their economies. But their success cannot be repeated in India by blindly following the IMF-oriented financial strategies.

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IN this critical juncture it is necessary to introspect the three drastic financial measures that are going to be attempted in accordance with the IMF/World Bank directives or the specific commitments made by the Government of India through the letter of intent to the IMF. Briefly, the specific commitments of the Government of India to the IMF are as follows:

a) to limit the fiscal deficit to 6.5 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) in the current financial year;
b) to reduce living on borrowed money, that is, from Rs 43,331 crores to Rs 37,727 crores;
c) to prune non-productive expenditures, that is, to reduce subsidies, defence spending and interest payment on foreign debt liabilities.

India's commitment to limit the fiscal deficit cannot be realised unless the climate is created for promoting savings and investment and bringing the inflationary forces under control. However, the savings rate can be improved only with an abatement of inflationary pressures, the continued creditable performance of the agricultural sector and a buoyant foreign trade. If production fails to maintain the present tempo even collection of taxes can fall short of the government's expectations. Sources in the North Block say that the shortfall in the customs revenue could be restricted at Rs 3500 crores in this financial year. There may be a 50 per cent shortfall in the Rs 2000 crore additional excise duty collection and the Income Tax Commissioners have already made it clear that they

The author is a Senior Lecturer in Political Science, Presidency College, Madras.

will not be able to step up collections beyond the target fixed in the budget. There may also be a tangible advantage out of the proceeds of sales of dollar bonds from the NRIs and OCBs and receipts under the amnesty schemes. There is every sign of credit squeeze which is likely to increase the inflationary rate to 30-40 per cent in the next financial year.

What we urgently need today is to make a serious effort to equate domestic saving with domestic investment. For that we need a two-pronged thrust:

a) to check the 'dissaving' by the government administration;
b) to streamline the administration for effective collection of revenue and for close estimation of revenue. For instance, the revenue from corporate taxes seems to have been understated in the present budget. [The revenue budget indicates the receipt from corporate taxes to be Rs 5400 crores in 1991-92 against Rs 6350 crores in 1990-91 (RE).]

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THE current year's non-plan budget expenditure and the revised non-plan budgetary expenditure of 1990-91 deserve careful attention. The government's non-plan expenditure demonstrates that the 'dissaving' attitude of the government in such items as police, defence, elections and interest payment are going to continue in the next budget (1992-93). As a result, the government may move towards reducing subsidies. Such tendencies may end up only in imposing increased hardship on the common man, instead of restoring balance in the economy.

Economic equity (distributive justice) stipulates that in any cutback in expenditure, it should not fall on non-productive expenditure alone which cares for the poorest and their basic needs.

The savings effected in the current budget year (1991-92) by the Finance Minister are: (a) Rs 435 crores by way of non-plan loans to public enterprises; (b) Rs 400 crores of fertiliser subsidy; and (c) Rs 451 crores in various non-plan other interest payments. (Table-I) In all, these measures will reduce the majore subsidy payments from 1.9 per cent of the GDP in 1990-91 to 1.2 per cent of the GDP in 1991-92.

If the government is really bothered about revenue expenditure why has the budget for the police been increased? This will result in the Indian budget culture of 'incrementalism' which will be carried over to the next budget. Secondly, the existing subsidy to public sector units cannot be suddenly eliminated without carefully restructuring the PSUs. Thirdly, Central assistance to plans for the States and Union Territories which stood at Rs 2348 crores is going to be considerably reduced. Introducing the Eighth Plan (1992-97) at the meeting of the National Development Council (NDC) the Prime Minister sent signals to the States to execute expeditiously the aided projects and strengthen the financial position with the elimination of subsidies and avoidance of waste. All these and others are going to subject the poorest sections in India to serious economic strain next year (1992-93).

Table I: **Central Government Expenditure**

Rupees in crores

	1990-91 (Revised)	*1991-92 (Budget)*	*Difference*
Non-Plan			
1. Interest Payments	21,850	27,450	(+)5600
2. Police	1581	1758	(+)177
3. Defence	15,750	16,350	(+)600
4. Postal Deficit	150	243	(+)93
5. Elections	60	200	(+)140
6. Charges payable to IMF	205	409	(+)204
7. Export Promotion	2700	1224	(-)1476
8. Non-Plan loans of Public Enterprises	1067	632	(-)435
9. Write off of loans to States (as per NFC recommendations)	966	-	(-)966
10. Gulf Evacuation	300	-	(-)300
11. Food Subsidy	2450	2600	(+)150
12. Fertiliser Subsidy	4400	4000	(-)400
13. Others	25,282	24,831	(-)451
Total Non-Plan			
14. Central Plan Outlay	17,604	19,015	(+)1411
15. Central Assistance to State and UT plans	12,362	14,710	(+)2348
Grand Total	1,06,717	1,13,422	(+)6695

Source: Budget papers, July 1991-92.

Further reducing subsidies in items other than non-plan expenditure faces a lot of inherited constraints. Firstly, there is no single opinion on the volume of subsidies in India. In fact there are open and hidden subsidies well entrenched within the Indian economy. The official calculation that the net subsidies alone account for Rs 10,000 to 12,000 crores is an open lie and distortion of facts. Secondly, in almost all sectors of the Indian economy one can find the intrusion of subsidies both by direct and indirect ways. The mechanism of reservations and differential tax structure itself represents the various forms of subsidies. The result is that in the last four decades of planned economy we have built up, on the one side, a gigantic system of taxation; and, on the other side, we have simultaneously developed a whole network of subsidies.

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A rough estimate of the total Central and State taxes amounted to Rs 68,000 crores (1988-89). In that same financial year the quantifiable subsidies within the economy were Rs 88,000 crores. By this reality, anything between 70 to 100 per cent of tax revenues raised are in fact served to cover subsidies. It appears that the IMF-oriented financial strategies will attack the overt subsidies, some of them meant for the poor, as for example, the food subsidy. In fact, overt subsidies on food, fertilisers and export promotion were but a small fraction. It is also inferred that covert subsidies are in essence accelerating the tempo of production. As such there should not be any cut in those subsidies which are meant to generate further wealth and employment. With regard to other kinds of subsidies those cannot be reduced from the macro-economic level. Thus it has become necessary to identify and select subsidies to productive and non-productive sectors.

Subsidies which are intended to cover a large number of geniunely poor in India (43 per cent below the poverty line) should not be reduced at any cost. In fact restructuring of the public distribution system (PDS) is the order of the day to serve the poor better. Anti-poverty programmes which run on Central Government subsidies need to be revitalised and thus made a potential source of increasing the real incomes of those who are covered under it. In future efforts have to be made to minimise the political interest while framing and implementing anti-poverty programmes.

For instance, the much ambitious Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) which was started in the year 1980 has suffered since then because the programme resources were deliberately sprinkled throughout the country to reap maximum political dividends. There has been no substantial economical benefit from such politically motivated anti-poverty and developmental programmes. Thus the depoliticisation of developmental programmes and anti-poverty programmes will enhance the real income of the poor people and provide near full employment. This falls within the ambit of the current economic policies and the implementation of the Eighth Plan which directly and indirectly depends much on government subsidies.

Even at this critical stage, it may be possible to save the poor as well as to reduce subsidies, provided the men who matter do some introspection and concentrate on basic economic issues affecting millions of poor. Thoughtless reduction of subsidies will cause further hardships for the poor and may result in social tension. Till we arrive at the stabilisation of the economy, it is necessary to ensure that in respect of rural-oriented programmes (which enjoy substantial subsidies in various forms) every caution has to be taken to arrest the generation of considerable money incomes. Because any rise in the real incomes of the newly employed should not result in the fall of the real incomes of those who are already employed.

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OUR enthusiasm for the competitive market system has its own limitation. As such it cannot be a quickfix solution for the problems of the Indian economy. For instance, out of 244 PSUs under the Central Government 98 are loss-making PSUs. Of these the loss-making PSUs operating in the competitive market were the ones which accounted for 79.3 per cent of the accumulated loss. Thus even in the competitive market mechanism, the Centre has to continue with indefinite budgetary and subsidy support. Budgetary support to the Central PSUs is budgeted to decline from 1.5 per cent of the GDP in 1990-91 to 1.2 per cent of the GDP in 1991-92. Things can be set right by replacing outmoded technology and over-employment without resorting to cut in the subsidies alone.

In the agricultural sector substantial subsidies involved in providing free electricity have to be reviewed and restructuring the tarrif of the State Electricity Boards (SEBs) could be the other strategy to reduce subsidies. For the small and marginal farmers the present rate of 14.6 paise per unit can be continued.

In the oil sector, as per the report of the Narasimhan Committee (December 1991), it is necessary to link petroleum products to the international level and reduce the subsidies for cooking gas. In the revenue side there is a need to increase the excise duty on luxury consumption goods which is very marginal now. Our revenue effort through direct taxation has to be increased. The sale of PSUs' equity (20-30 per cent) will reduce the fiscal deficit. There is, therefore, a clear case for an effort at raising larger resources.

Thus the fiscal deficit can be reduced through the reduction of subsidies but should not be restricted at the board economic-macro level. Our concern for any reduction of subsidies should permeate and penetrate into almost every major and minor sector of the Indian economy. It is the step-by step, sector-by-sector search for the reduction of subsidies that is not only unproductive but is also not intended for 43 per cent of the poorest in India. It is fortunate that this time the IMF never insisted on specific commitments from us, but it will not be the same in the next three years, where it may insist on reforms, not merely at the macro-level but at the very important strategic segment of the Indian economy.

To conclude, reducing subsidies is one plank of the deficit management strategy. Obviously success cannot be achieved through this process alone. It is right and proper that every patriotic appeal must be made to increase exports. All of us must resolve to take up productivity as a challenge. Reduction of subsidies must be governed by both growth and equity. Economic ethics in a democratic set-up demands that the poorest in India should not be in anyway affected by reducing subsidies. ■

Non-proliferation of Soviet Nuclear Weapons

M. ZUBERI

The emergence of a Commonwealth of Independent States from the ruins of the former Soviet Union has raised the troubling issue of the non-proliferation of the vast Soviet nuclear stockpile.

An estimated 27,000 nuclear warheads are deployed within the republics of Russia, Ukraine, Byelorussia and Kazakhstan. Thousands of tactical nuclear weapons are scattered over the various republics. The Soviet ICBMs are deployed in hardened underground silos roughly following the route of the Trans-Siberian Railway across the country. Bruce Blair, a former American Air Force missile-launch control officer and an expert on the Soviet nuclear command and control systems, says that Soviet safeguards against unauthorised use of nuclear weapons have been "more stringent than those of any other nuclear power, including the United States".

Until recently there were several layers of control and the Soviet President as well as the Ministry of Defence had to provide a special code to start the launching process. Warheads were guarded separately from the missiles; the missile silos generally contained two regular servicemen and two KGB men. To arm a missile, a 12-digit number had to be punched into an electronic cypherlock; punching the wrong code could permanently disable the warhead. Moreover, each code was good for only one warhead or a small group of warheads. Special electronic keys and blocking devices strengthened the security arrangements. During the abortive August coup, the commander-in-charge of mobile SS-25 ICBMs reportedly sheltered them in garrisons where they could be safely kept away from turmoil. According to all recent reports, there has been no loosening of the electronic grip and centralised control over the stockpile.

Far more complex than the custody of nuclear weapons is the question of the unity of the command, control, communications and intelligence network and the impact of the emergence of independent states on this network. Command and control is more than custody of the so-called "Nuclear Button" containing the codes for the release of nuclear weapons. The vast array of early warning systems, underground, mobile and airborne command centres, monitoring stations and command and control bunkers for the top civilian and military leaderships are components of this complex and vastly-dispersed system.

The Soviet Air Defence Forces headquarters near Moscow made the early warning and attack assessment which had to be passed on to some 30 military National Command Authority bunkers. Multiple hardened facilities and mobile command vehicles and aircraft provided support. Nine intermediate strategic force headquarters and about 300 launch centres controlled the land-based ICBM forces. There were also a number of airborne command centres. At any time 15 to 20 Soviet ballistic missile submarines were away from their home bases.

According to American sources, 12 of the 16 Soviet bases for the ICBMs were in Russia as were 10 of 12 mobile ICBM bases, all six ballistic missile submarine bases and 11 and 26 strategic bomber bases. Some early warning satellites were launched from Kazakhstan and many radar systems were outside the Russian territory with some in the Ukraine and Byelorussia. The entire command, control, communication and intelligence network was linked to Moscow. Fragmentation of this network, builtup over several decades at enormous cost was a major concern of Gorbachev during the last days of his presidency of the former Soviet Union.

The deliberations at Alma Ata were inconclusive on this issue. It was agreed that Russia will have the custody of the codes for the release of nuclear weapons subject to a collective decision-making process involving the Ukraine, Byelorussia and Kazakhstan. This would mean that Moscow, Kiev, Minsk and Alma Ata will be linked together on the deadly issue of nuclear war. But as the *Financial Times* of London has reminded us, Alma Ata is nearer to Beijing than it is to Minsk and Minsk is half the distance from London than from Alma Ata. Air Marshal Yevgeny Shaposhnikov is the interim head of all the armed forces. A clear

The author, a noted expert on disarmament issues, belongs to the Centre for International Politics and Organisation Disarmament, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

delineation of nuclear responsibilities has not been made so far. Eduard Shevardnadze stated on December 30, 1991 that he was worried about the possibility of nuclear weapons, scattered all over the Soviet Union falling into the hands of para-military forces.

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DESPITE these agreements, there were important nuances distinguishing the postures of the republics on the nuclear issue. The Ukraine has at present such a large number of strategic and tactical nuclear weapons on its territory that it can qualify as the second most powerful nuclear weapon power in Europe, Russia being the foremost such entity. Its stockpile is larger than the combined total of the British and French holdings. During the recent elections in the Ukraine, all nationalist candidates including President Leonid Kravchuk spoke against the transfer of nuclear weapons to Russia on the ground that they did not want to strengthen "Russian imperialism". There is, however, a strong anti-nuclear movement in the country and Chernobyl is a grim reminder of the nuclear danger. The Ukraine would like to have the status of a nuclear weapon-free country and is willing to subscribe to the NPT and other arms control agreements. It would prefer nuclear weapons on its territory destroyed as soon as possible and has even made a request seeking assistance from American experts for this purpose. Byelorussia would also like to get rid of nuclear weapons on its territory and join the NPT.

President Nurusultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan assured James Baker that his republic was for joint control over all Soviet nuclear weapons. This posture is coupled with his insistence that his republic will keep nuclear weapons for as long as Russia does. There is an unwillingness to allow Russia to have a monopoly of these weapons. Semiplantinsk, the Soviet nuclear test site, is located in Kazakhstan. It has been shut down as a result of a mass movement led by a famous poet.

The United States and the other Western powers would like to have only Russia as a nuclear weapon power joining the NPT; the Ukraine, Byelorussia and Kazakhstan are expected to be non-nuclear weapon states signatories to the treaty. This can happen only if strategic and tactical nuclear weapons located in the three independent republics are either transferred to Russia or destroyed on their territories. Digging the land-based ICBMs from their silos in the republics, transporting them to Russia and building silos and other necessary structures for them is going to cost tens of billions of dollars and will take a considerable amount of time. Removal of all tactical nuclear weapons, including artillery shells, bombs and mines, is a much easier task but raises the vexed question of making sure that some of these portable weapons have not been kept in secret places.

Dismantling of the nuclear warheads would be a longdrawn process. Sergei Rogov, a Soviet arms control expert, estimates that it could take at least twenty-five to thirty years and it is difficult to predict the course of events over such a long period. Andrei Kortunov, another arms control expert, can picture a situation "in which the nuclear forces just melt—morale is down, people defect, computers malfunction, there is no checking, there are accidents, blunders and so on" and "this scenario could happen even next spring." A report prepared by experts at Harvard University has suggested that it would be faster to disable the warheads at site. Ashton Carter, one of the authors of this report, has outlined a programme of "quick and dirty" disarmament. Fissile material should be removed from warheads, then "wrap the pieces in plastic or metal wraps and squash them". This way the "geometry" of the material would be deformed thereby removing the possibilities of an explosion. Carter then suggests wrapping the fissile material in very thick plastic and putting it back into bunkers. This "quick and dirty" disarmament is not the final solution of the problem. The US Congress has sanctioned 400 million for the specific purpose of storing, dismantling and destroying these weapons.

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THE economic and political chaos in the former Soviet Union has raised another issue related to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons; this is the possibility of Soviet experts in the nuclear military field leaving the country and their services becoming available to other states. In a recent interview with a Moscow newspaper, V.N. Mikhalyov, an important member of the nuclear weapons programme, lamented the poor living conditions of nuclear scientists. Insisting that his colleagues were "patriots and none of them wants to go abroad and work on creating weapons for anyone", he asked, "how is it possible to live now on 400 roubles a month?" And he added: "What is a person to do if he only knows how to make atom bombs and nothing more when he feels unwanted in his own country?" Vladlen Sirotikin, a Soviet historian and political columnist, recently declared, "give me a million bucks and I'll have a nuclear-tipped missile stolen for you and delivered any place you want".

William C. Potter, an American expert who conducted a nuclear non-proliferation workshop in Moscow in October 1991, has mentioned a Russian organisation called the International Chetek Corporation of Moscow, founded in December 1990, which provides peaceful nuclear explosive services as a desirable means of disposing of toxic waste, decommissioned reactors and retired nuclear weapons.

Assurances regarding the safe, reliable and centralised control of the nuclear stockpile of the former Soviet Union have been given by Gorbachev, Yeltsin and other responsible civilian and military leaders of the republics. Richard Cheney, however, declared on American television that central control over the former Soviet Union's 25,000 to 30,000 nuclear weapons was incomplete. According to him it was 99 percent successful but "you still have 250 (nuclear warheads) that they are unable to control".

The former Soviet Union's research reactors and nuclear power plants, scattered in different parts of the country, were not subjected to IAEA safeguards inspections because it was a nuclear weapon power The IAEA's safeguards are applied generally from the beginning of a reactor's operational life; this enables the Agency to have a complete inventory from the start-up of the reactor. The long duration of research reactor's and nuclear power plants' operation in the former Soviet Union raises the issue of verification procedures in arms control. If the Ukraine, Byelorussia and Kazakhstan join the NPT as non-nuclear weapon powers, the IAEA will face the unprecedented task of preparing an authentic and complete inventory of fissionable material in their nuclear installations.

Nuclear weapons appear to have become bargaining chips in the negotiations between Russia, the Ukraine, Byelorussia and Kazakhstan and between these republics and potential aid donors overseas. Recognition of independent status and economic and technological assistance would depend on a satisfactory arrangement about the custody and non-proliferation of these weapons. But as Senator Sam Nunn, Chairman of the US Armed Services Committee, put it:

> We are on the verge of either the greatest destruction of nuclear weapons in the history of the world or the greatest proliferation of nuclear weapons, nuclear materials and the scientific know-how to make these weapons. ■

Information on Six Media Efforts in English and Hindi

by Bharat Dogra

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Chipko: Social Background of an Environmental Movement

HARSH DOBHAL

The Himalayas are the life-support system providing basic subsistence to its inhabitants in particular, and all others in general. The source of major, perennial, life-giving rivers, the Himalayas have loomed large in the spiritual and religious life of the Indian civilisation. Today, the world's greatest and the youngest mountain range is being butchered in the hands of the modern capitalistic society. As the flora and fauna die, most people merely stand by and watch, horror-strick but silent. And yet there are some whose voices rise to protect the very finite part of this planet. The Chipko movement, today one of the most celebrated environmental movements of the world, was a people's initiative in this direction, up in the Garhwal Hills of UP, that spread out to the whole of India.

In true Gandhian spirit the satyagraha could only be observed by the people themselves relying on their own strength and organisation which gave a new direction to a non-violent struggle. After Gandhi most satyagrahas have failed to honour the commitments implied in the term and debased this noble idea and its credibility. Fortunately even in these times, Chipko demonstrated and reinforced the potential and promise of satyagraha before us.

'Chipko' literally means hugging, in this case encircling the trees with human embrace. Some writers have seen 'Chipko' as having its origin in an incident believed to have occured in Rajasthan in 1753, when members of the Bishnoi sect laid down their lives to protect the trees being felled under the orders from the Maharaja of Jodhpur. Amrita Devi and her three daughters alongwith 363 villagers are believed to have laid down their lives when they attempted to protect trees by hugging and axes fell on them.

Before the middle of the last century the only major intrusion by the state in the life of the people of Uttarakhand, before taking over of its forests, was the system of forced labour known as the '*begar* system'. This authoritarian system was protested against from time to time. In the middle of the ninteenth century the commercial exploitation of forests was started by the British and the Princely States. Prior to this exploitation nearly 75 per cent land was covered by forests. The lives of the people were inextricably interwoven with mountain culture and forests. The forests provided the basic subsistence. There was an absence of class differences within the village society, which to a large extent owes its origin to ecological characteristics of the mountain society, the close integration of agriculture with forests and pastures, the distinct ecologically determined hallmark of mountain society. There have always stood major ecological obstacles to the generation and emergence of social classes in the hill society. As Uttarakhand was virtually unaffected by external political forces, the system of properly regulated resource use had become an integral and permanent part of the social fabric. Later they were suppressed by the system of forest management, propelled by powerful economic and political forces, whose motives revolved around a radically different set of priorities.

The building of the railway network is a major landmark in the history of Indian forestry. In 1864, a Forests Department was set up hastily with the help of German experts as a result of tremendous destruction of accessible forests which aimed at supplying durable timbers. Himalayan pines provided the best answer and thus started the commercial exploitation of forests. For a period of 14 years (1850-1864) the forests of the Bhagirathi Valley were leased to the British by the then ruler of Tehri. Felling continued for another 20 years

The author is a student of M.A. (Sociology), School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

and the steep slopes could never resurrect, once felled.

Prior to this, forests were owned, managed, regulated and used by the local communities who always exercised their moral right over forests that formed a part of their culture. There was a close interaction between the local people and forests around, the very entity of which they subsisted. But now the forests were owned by the state depriving the local people of their rights which they held over centuries. Voice was raised against this act by women especially, as women are the worst suffers if we locate them into the social structure of the hill society. Later they were offered land for cultivation but deprived of the right to forests.

The logic of management departed drastically from the logic of villagers. Now all commercially insignificant weeds were eliminated permanently. These broad-leaved species provided fodder, fuel, food and fertility to the soil. Their place was taken by pine and this change in species had a disastrous effect on ecology which was the permanent economy of local people. With the disappearance of these forests water resources started drying up, soil erosion was accelerated. The prevalence of *chir* led to soil acidity. The villagers resisted this and their plea was: "We need broad-leaved food, fodder and fuel species to feed ourselves and our cows." But their protest was brutally suppressed.

Tapping resin was another form of exploiting forests commercially. During 1920 the number of resin channels tapped was 21,35,000 while in 1921 it was 2,60,000 only. This increase led to exporting turpentine to the UK and the Far East. Consequently, during World War II felling and sawings were pushed into the remotest areas which had so far not witnessed even the shadow of the modern form of development

This faced simmering discontent among local people, occasionally breaking into open revolts that, at times, accompanied attempts to take over forests. In 1930 a major agitation was launched against the Raja of Tehri for he had forged a nexus with the British to deprive the people of their rights over forests.

This exploitation and destruction of forests continued and so did the periodical protests. The state went on earning revenue and the so-called development in other areas of the country gathered momentum at the expense of the poor people of Uttarakhand. Besides, the various Forest Acts since 1864 have sought to keep away the locals not only from exercising their rights over forest wealth but have also deprived them of the basic necessities which they used to produce from jungles.

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THE consequent prolonged and simmering discontent found full expression in the form of famous 'Chipko' in 1973, that has focused worldwide attention on the grave environmental crisis in the Himalayan region. 'Chipko' can only be analysed as a response to the fragmentation of the village community and growing social and ecological disintegration of a traditional hill society. One can say that the increasingly changing, complex but antagonistic, relationship between the state and the people found expression in the form of popular consciousness generated by the Chipko movement. Within Uttarakhand there is a diversity in social structure at micro-level, and hence the movement took different forms correspondingly. As mentioned earlier, women again came to the forefront and that is why Chipko is often depicted as a women's movement.

Social protests, occasionally breaking out into militancy has been the history of the Paharis (hill people) of Uttarakhand. While most movements went unseen and unnoticed, 'Chipko' caught worldwide attention since it was a sustained and organised movement coupled with the charismatic leadership of Sunderlal Bahuguna, Chandi Prasad Bhatt and others who generated popular mobilisation and a new consciousnes. For the first time women realised that their active participation could change government policies. 'Uttarakhand Sangharsh Vahini' was a product of this movement which is even today actively involved in social work in this region. After Chipko's grand success, a new political, social and scientific consciousness has spread amongst the people here.

Sunderlal Bahuguna, the much respected environmentalist today, was a prominent Sarvodaya leader. Several times he agitated against liqour sale in Uttarakhand. He went on fasts with many others and several times the agitators were jailed too. In the early fifties the demand for a separate Hill State also gathered momentum. At the same time several students went on strike demanding the establishment of universities in the hills. The

Tehri project was opposed and *bandhs* and *dharnas* successfully organised in several towns. All these protests cannot be studied in isolation. 'Chipko' was the fullest expression of these protests and the people's attitude towards the state.

In 1970 the region witnessed the most collossal and devastating flood which marked the turning point in the ecological history of this region. Water inundated 100 square kilometres of land, washed away six metal bridges, 10 kilometres of road, 24 buses, several dozen other vehicles, 366 houses collapsed and 500 acres of standing paddy crop was washed away. The loss of human and bovine life was mind-boggling. As a direct consequence the Ganga Canal was blocked and around 95 lakh acres of land in eastern UP went unirrigated causing food scarcity. People realised the fact that due to denuded hill slopes, deforestation, and butchering of trees, the soil had become too fragile to retain water and to bear the onslaught of heavy rain. People realised that the survival of trees was the survival of people.

The cumulative effect of all these realisations was the people's fight to protect the forests. In 1973 the local organisations were denied allotment of ash trees in order to make some agricultural implements. Instead the Symonds company was alotted ash trees. The people organised against this injustice.

First, they stopped timber trucks, burnt resin depots and argued with the government officials and contractors. Sarvodaya workers were the most active people. Several methods were applied but found unsatisfactory. Finally, they thought of 'hugging trees' by human embrace to stop felling. They said: "If the axes have to fall, they will fall on us first." This was a spontaneous reaction of helpless people. The government tried its best by wheeling and dealing but they would not give up. Once in the absence of the menfolk, Gaura Devi, the head of the Mahila Mandal, organised an all-women agitation against the contractors who had reached there in the absence of the menfolk, as a part of their devil strategy. The women very valiantly forced them to retreat from the brutal act of felling trees.

Despite all those agitations the government went ahead with its work and so did the periodical protests, dharnas and picketings by the people. Their leaders would observe fasts in the jungles even on chilly winter nights. For almost ten years the movement sustained itself.

In 1981 Sunderlal Bahuguna urged a total ban on green felling in the Himalayan region above an altitude of 1000 metres. When unheeded and unnoticed, he undertook an indefinite fast and met Mrs Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India. As a consequence a committee was set up and a Model Forest Conservation Act was formulated by the State Government which became quite controversial in later years.

The Chipko leaders have been spreading their message thereafter which included a 4780 kilometre footmarch by Bahuguna from Kashmir to Kohima. Chipko adheres itself to alternative development schemes also.

Thus, Chipko represents one of the most positive and innovative responses to the ecological crisis of the modern industrial society. It can be analysed as a romantic reunion of man and nature, science and culture, tradition and modernity. It was a spontaneous reaction to rescue a hill society from the ravages of the modern capitalist onslaught. The Himalayan ecological crisis cannot be studied in isolation, rather it can be rooted in modern materialistic civilisation which has disastrous future implications.

Chipko also had its underlying ethical notions of morality, equity and social justice. It has consolidated and catalysed social consciousness of the hill people against exploitation, neglect and deprivation that they suffered for decades together. Chipko quite successfully has been trying to arrest this Himalayan tragedy. Not only the Himalayas but the very survival of the whole eco-system is in crisis today, and that is why the slogans of Chipko find an echo far and wide, cutting across all boundaries. Today its relevance extends way beyond the parameters of conservation, afforestation and ecological harmony into the very realm of humanity, peace and brotherhood. ■

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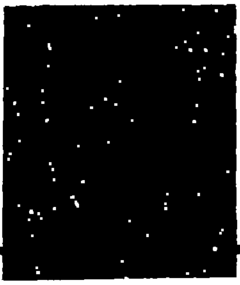
"Higher Productivity alongwith continuous improvement in the quality of tea"

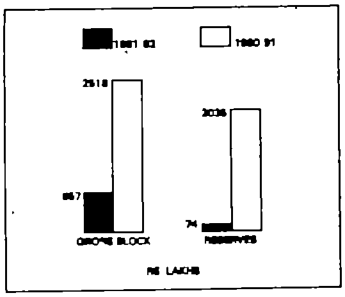


Excerpts from the speech of Mrs Shirin Paul, Chairperson, Assam Frontier Tea Limited, at the 14th Annual General Meeting held on September 27th, 1991 at Talap, Assam

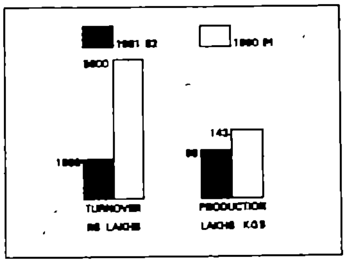
The Management pays its homage to the Late Rajiv Gandhi whose life was cut short by assassins He dreamt of a strong modern India He was committed to the upliftment of backward and underprivileged classes The policy measures that the new government headed by Mr P V Narasimha Rao has taken so far promise to unleash the latent productive forces in the economy In the highly competitive environment that is sought to be created, there has to be greater awareness of productivity and cost effectiveness

Assam Frontier Tea Limited has once again produced excellent working results for the year ended March 31, 1991 The company's sales are up from Rs 52 75 crore to Rs 56 crore while the profit before depreciation and taxation has risen from Rs 18 92 crore to Rs 19 84 crore In view of this encouraging performance, the company has paid a total dividend of Rs 10 50 per equity share, including the interim of Rs 3 50

Due to unfavourable climatic conditions, the 1990 crop at 143 62 lakh kg was marginally lower than the previous year's crop of 145 30 lakh kg Higher unit value realisation, however, enabled the company to record an increase in turnover



Sustained efforts at improving the quality of teas produced and effective cost control measures have stood Assam Frontier in good stead The company's working vindicate the management's investment decisions of earlier years The cornerstone of the strategy formulated by the company's erstwhile chairman Late Mr Surrendra Paul is that higher productivity must be achieved alongwith continuous improvement in quality

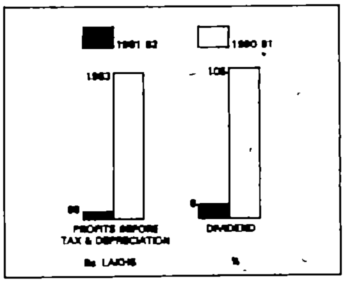


How well the company has been run since the present management took it over in 1981-82 will be evident from the increase in gross block from Rs 6 57 crore to Rs 25 18 crore and of reserves from Rs 74 lakh to Rs 20 35 crore Earning per share is Rs 21 It is gratifying for the management that Assam Frontier is a much sought after share on the stock exchange

The prospects for the current year look encouraging An improvement in productivity and quality is expected, thanks to the favourable growing conditions

Export has always been given pride of place We must not spare any efforts in stepping up export sales in view of the unprecedented balance of payments crisis faced by the country We have been successful in exporting our tea to Iran for the second consecutive year Teas were also exported to the traditional London Auction Centres where the price realisation was, however, disappointing Your company's teas received good support from the Russian Agents at the domestic auction centres and German buyers showed an interest in our teas We continue to explore new avenues for bulk and value added packet tea exports

Your management remains deeply committed to the welfare of the staff, workers and their families The recent industrywise agreement with the Assam Cha karamchari Sangha will benefit the members of the staff The company's various socio economic projects not only benefit its own workers but also the people living around the tea estates Construction work of the Bogdung School adjoining our Khanjan Estate is progressing satisfactorily The completed portion of the school is being utilised by the students of the locality Other schools set up during the year at Budlabeta, Hokonguri and Hapjan have gone a long way in meeting the educational needs of the localities The Apeejay Medical Centre at Longsoal is now well supplemented by a modern well equipped mobile clinic, which is providing antinatal care and immunisation to children in the remote rural areas



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Perestroika and the History of Russia

VLADIMIR G. KHOROS

This article was written before the formal dismantling of the USSR last month.

—Editor

Some of you may have seen *Andrei Rublyov* made by our outstanding film director Tarkovsky. The film is about the great Russian painter of the fifteenth century. At the same time it is a certain symbol of Russian history. Tarkovsky focuses his attention on the triangle "power-intelligentsia-the people". Each of the elements of the triad is doing its own work: power rules, the people automatically obey the former and the intelligentsia (which is personified by Andrei Rublyov) is somehow trying to humanise the relationship between power and the people. These efforts fail. Power tramples not only common people but also artists. Rublyov's icons are destroyed, churches are plundered. At first Rublyov gives way to despair but then comes to a stoic decision: to continue doing his work despite everything, wandering about the villages, painting churches, rejoicing the people. The sides of the triangle do not intersect.

Such is Tarkovsky's sad interpretation of Russian history which to a certain extent reflects the reality. If we take Tarkovsky's triangle as the starting-point for looking back into our past we shall see that very seldom did the three sides unite into the whole. This usually happened only under the impact of external danger, wars and invasions. During the rest of the time only two forces interacted at best: sometimes intelligentsia supported power without too much considering the needs of the common people; at other times, just the other way round, intelligentsia tried to win the people over to their side in the confrontation with power. Sometimes power and the people united to persecute intelligentsia.

On the whole, the existence and evolution of each side was mainly determined by its own inner motivation.

Perestroika which is underway in our country has stirred public opinion. Heated discussions about the guidelines of economic and political reform and the optimal solution of urgent social problems are taking place in the USSR. In my opinion, such a solution can be found only within a historical context. There is no perspective without retrospection. This particularly refers to the historical evolution of Russia with immense inertia inherent in it. This inertia, so to say strength of materials, as well as such elements of cultural tradition that could facilitate progress, should be taken into account by any earnest social engineer. Being a historian, I will try to outline the retrospection within the above mentioned triangle "power-the people-intelligentsia".

Professor Khoros, a Doctor of Historical Sciences, is the Head of the Department of Politology at the Institute of World Economy and International Relations under the Academy of Sciences, Moscow.

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POWER: Restructuring in Russia has always been initiated from above. The present *perestroika* is the third in succession. Comparing these transformations one can observe certain common trends.

The first *perestroika* took place when Peter the Great carried out his reforms in the first quarter of the eighteeenth century. Historians have often presented Peter as a man who wanted to Europeanise Russia, raising it to the level of Western civilisation. However, actually Peter had no especially elaborate programme for his policy; he was dragged into it under the impact of the circumstances, in the course of the Northern war. Certainly, he sought "to open the window into Europe", to make Russia a maritime power. But this was what Ivan the Terrible had also sought. What distinguished Peter was the fact that having got familiar with foreigners since his childhood and having estimated their knowledge and technical skills he managed to find the key to the task of foreign policy—borrowing European experience for the modernisation of the army. But while pursuing his policy Peter created something more significant, that is, certain social structures that demonstrated considerable historical stability.

The centre of these structures became the military-industrial complex, if we apply a present-day term here. It comprised, besides the army and the navy, small arms factories, manufacturers supplying personnel with all necessary commodities, construction works, road service, etc. Besides, Peter needed well-trained soldiers and officers and for this purpose the system of training and education was expanded and improved. Finally, the implementation of the given programme required the reform of government and Peter spared no effort to make old Russian bureaucracy more dynamic and rational making use of the experience of German, Swedish and Dutch institutions.

Hertzen once said of Peter's reforms that Peter had fixed European arms to an Asian body. But the body did remain Asian. Moreover, the pressure on the toiling population greatly intensified. Peter transferred serfdom from rural to urban areas, to the sphere of industry. Violence and coercion became the major means of implementing the planned projects. Construction of Petersburg can serve as a vivid example of it. Duties were increased threefold, and the population decreased by one-fifth during Peter's reign—such was the price of Peter's modernisation campaign.

As a result, a structure was created which can be defined as a model of pre-bourgeois empire which, nevertheless, coexisted and competed with other more developed Western countries. The model was characterised by the following features: (1) selective borrowing of technological (mainly military and industrial) achievements of Europe in exchange for the export of raw materials; (2) intensification of exploitation of the people based on pre-bourgeois, despotic methods; (3) growing centralisation and bureaucratisation of government.

One can see that the model created during the period of Peter's reforms was characterised by inner contradictions, but at the same time by peculiar rationality permitting periodical renovation, albeit at an expensive price. To complete the picture mention should also be made of rich domestic resources and the patience of the Russian population. No wonder that in international politics beginning from Peter's reign Russia became one of the first fiddles in the European orchestra.

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HOWEVER, after a century and a half this fiddle began to play out of tune. Russia suffered a defeat in the Crimean war and it was obvious that the military triumph of Europe resulted from a vast (and increased) difference in the levels of social development and that Russia would no longer be able to borrow Western technological achievements unless the level of economic and cultural development, as well as management, rose. In the 1860s a series of reforms, primarily the abolition of serfdom, began to be implemented. That was the second *perestroika* in Russia.

This time transformations were much more extensive and profound as far as borrowing the experience of European institutions is concerned. Not only was the peasantry liberated from the bondage of serfdom, but local *(zemstvo)* self-government was also obtained. Trial by jury was introduced and press censorship became less strict. All this paved the way for a more extensive development of bourgeois relations.

Nevertheless, the already familiar empire model manifested itself at this stage as well. On the one hand, the government encouraged bourgeois relations; on the other hand, it held back their development. Numerous remnants of serfdom managed to survive. The implementation of land reforms was dragged out for many decades (the final redemption of peasant land was planned to be completed only by 1930). Changes in political structures were minimal with rigid bureaucratic centralism limiting social initiative, possible positive results of juridical and *zemstvo* reforms, as well as that of the press. Imperial policy, as before, had its own priorities: after the conquest of the Caucasus, the annexation of Central Asia was carried out and the expansion in the Far East was started.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, contradictions inherent in the empire model led to its collapse. Power structures were weakening, social tension was growing having engendered a strong revolutionary movement from below. The unsuccessful wars of 1904 and of 1914-17 also contributed to its collapse.

I will not specially dwell on the October Revolution as we are speaking about restructuring, that is, reforms initiated from above. I would only like to point out that the socialist revolution in Russia could develop in different ways: It could develop into democratic, cooperative-market socialism (which was outlined by NEP) or into a centralised, administrative-commanding system (which emerged during the period of 'War Communism'). The second alternative prevailed over the first. Bearing in mind the subject of this article it should be emphasised here that once the Stalinist regime became firmly established, a peculiar restoration of the Russian empire model took place, albeit its ideological contents were different. All the features of the old model were present: industrialisation oriented primarily towards the establishment and development of a military-industrial complex; non-economic methods of production organisation; rigid political centralisation; forced or semi-forced labour.

Limitation of space prevents me from a detailed analysis of the causes of the above mentioned restoration. I will try to explain the phenomenon with the help of the following comparison. In the

Hindu-Buddhist culture there is a concept of *karma*—the burden of previous existences of man which can be rationally looked upon as genetic heritage. In a sense we can assume that whole nations have their *karma* and that some or other cultural stereotypes are inherited by successive generations forming a sort of invariant. The empire invariant was also acting during the period of 1930-70. Once again was the society drawn into a grave social strain which caused a considerable lagging behind developed countries. By the mid-eighties the critical situation had become obvious and this necessitated the third *perestroika* in Russian history. This time the tasks facing *perestroika* are much more complicated and challenging because the main problem consists in the fact that it is necessary to renounce the very model which the country had stuck to for about three centuries with the exception of short intervals.

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THE PEOPLE: It consisted mainly of the peasantry which was patriarchal as far as economic relations, way of life or cultural and psychological characteristics are concerned. It was characterised on the one hand, by an obvious anti-landowners mood; and on the other hand, by strong Czarist illusions, based on the belief that the monarchy should settle its conflict with landowners giving the land to the peasants. Hence the social passivity of the Russian peasantry, its patience towards the exploiters.

During the sevententh and eighteenth centuries not once did the peasant protest take the form of large-scale uprisings (as those headed by Razin, Bolotnikov, Pugachev). All those were actions mainly of a particular social stratum—the Cossacks, who were more mobile and militant as compared to the peasants.

Besides, peasant riots, as a matter of fact, did not exceed the limits of feudal order as far as their slogans are concerned (against the landowners but for 'the kind Czar'). As a strong third estate was not available, the peasant masses yielded to the processes of bourgeois transformation only very slowly. Feudal structures of Russia could not engender any stable elements of bourgeois law; Russian peasants had never been private owners of their land.

From the second half of the nineteenth century the working class began to take shape and develop in Russia, its most progressive contingents (metal workers and railwaymen) quickly acquired political consciousness imbibing revolutionary socialist ideology. But they were not numerous, surrounded by a mass of proletarians of the first generation, their psychology being close to that of the peasantry.

Being socially inert and a politically passive class, the Russian peasantry at the same time created a peculiar folk culture, albeit pre-bourgeois and not much developed but to a certain extent integral and attractive. Not without reason did great Russian writers from Pushkin to Leo Tolstoy and Bunin describe it with such enthusiasm and it was also admired by the *narodniks* (Russian populists). But from the second half of the nineteenth century folk culture was subjected to a deep-set erosion which caused grave and far-reaching consequences.

In Russia, which was a country of belated capitalism, the emergence and development of the bourgeois system was stimulated from outside rather than being an organic process. In contrast to the long centuries of European development, this process was pressed in time and met with strong opposition of traditional institutions, stereotypes of consciousness hampering it as well. Hence initially, especially in the reflection of public opinion, the influence of capitalism on the society was seen as destructive rather than positive causing social decay. Thus after the reform of 1861 there emerged in the countryside landless or land-starved peasant households (their share accounted up to one-fifth) which for a number of reasons (strict administrative barriers to their secession from the commune, insufficient demand for labour in the industrial sector) found themselves, so to speak, between the city and the countryside.

Keen observers did not fail to note the growth of this stratum. Gleb Uspensky, a well-known publicist and an expert on peasant life, wrote in the 1880s that the Russian peasant had endured everything: the Tartars, the Germans, but he could not endure 'the rouble shock'. Uspensky expressively described this product of decay in the countryside as 'angry paupers'.[1] And at the end of the century, Russian literature and the press expressed their anxiety over the problem of *bosyachestvo*[*] as a widespread phenomenon.

What did this process signify? It was not only a matter of the emergence of paupers, outcasts (Uspensky had every reason to speak of 'angry paupers', not simply pauperism). In Russia a category of people was growing that can be described as socio-cultural lumpens. In sociology the notion of lumpens is traditionally associated with poverty, material privations caused by declassing. In my opinion, it should be also (if not primarily) associated with socio-cultural uprootedness, alienation from previous social class or social estate structures which provided a person with not only fixed social status but also certain cultural orientation. Uprootedness which was not accompanied by the process of taking roots in new social strata (of bourgeois society), in a new system of values.

Thus, uprooted elements emerged in all marginal social groups. At the end of the nineteenth century, besides declassed peasants, there were declassed gentry, merchants, intellectuals, etc. in Russia. In a famous play by Gorky, *Night Asylum*, almost all the strata of Russian society of that time are represented.

Uprooted consciousness is usually rid of previous values and stereotypes. A cultural cover falls down, revealing instincts. Primarily the instinct of survival, but simultaneously the instinct of destruction, aggression, revenge on the society for having pushed the marginals out of it. Lumpen consciousness is, certainly meagre and easily succumbs to hypnotism and manipulation but it is only a semblance of that *tabula rasa* on which Mao Zedong was going to inscribe any character. In fact only those characters can be inscribed that are in keeping with "cleared", "decultured" instinctive motives. Therefore, lumpen consciousness presents an odd mixture of levelling ('to be like everybody') and self seeking, asceticism and thirst for possession, plebian democratism and respect for hierarchy, striving for learning and hatred of educated people and culture at large. Their political behaviour is also ambivalent: inclination to anarchist riots is easily transformed into willingness to submit to power, strength (particularly when one is associated with them).

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THE lumpen strata increased considerably in the twentieth century during the period of the three revolutions (in which they took an active part), imperialist and civil wars, in short all the great upheavals that have befallen Russia in the first quarter of this century, when destruction of the society caused by belated, 'peripheral' capitalism was greatly aggravated during states of emergency, that is, wars, famine, privations. By mid-1920s groups of such 'lost' people, culturally disoriented and declassed elements, had formed such a critical mass that that became the social mainstay of Stalinism.

Simultaneously with the mass declassing of society, the corresponding ideology of 'barracks socialism' was also taking shape. Its roots can be traced back to the sixties of the nineteenth century. It was then that Nechayev, a lumpen intellectual, came on the scene with his ideal of a society where 'as much as possible should be produced and as little as possible should be consumed' and with his Jesuit methods of revolutionary struggle. It was then that Tkachev came on the scene. He openly called for forcing the working masses 'to readjust their life... according to the ideal of the best and justest society'[3] after the revolution. Certainly the majority of the revolutionaries were by no means as blunt and consistent as Nechayev and Tkachev. But the trend of barracks socialism in one or another, form can be traced down in the Russian liberation movement up to the 1920s. If it were not for this we would not be able to comprehend the phenomenon of War Communism, for instance, or to understand why in the 1920s some Marxist historians considered Nechayev and Tkachev as forerunners of Bolshevism.

With the appearance of Stalin the ideological trend of barracks socialism and its mass exponent (socio-cultural lumpens) finally met. Stalin, who to a certain extent was an outclass figure himself, understood the psychology of this stratum better than anybody. He deliberately flooded the party with a motley element—from the Kaganoviches and Malenkovs at the top to the smallest pawns of the party mechanism. He was the first to realise as to who could carry out collectivisation in the countryside: the 'depeasantised' and resentful lower strata. In building an administrative-command system he took advantage of the political traditions of Russia. He did not have to invent anything, the only thing he had to do was just to let loose the accumulated trends already available in society.

But having come to power in a wave of socio-cultural lumpens, Stalinism intensified it considerably and spread it to the whole society. This was achieved primarily through deindividualisation of man, through binding him to the chariot of the state economically, politically and culturally. A system was created where a concrete individual could mean anything only being an integral part of one or another state unit. In the 'barracks' society with its rigid economic and political structures, with levelling made state policy, with a corresponding system of propaganda, education and moulding of the young generation lumpen, culturally uprooted consciousness was reproduced on its own basis. Isolation of society served the same purposes. Isolation not only from the milieu, but also from the country's own national and cultural past. Primitivsation of Marxism, negation of pre-revolutionary Russian culture and of 'alien' scientific achievements, persecution of religion—all those were components of one and the same process.

Unfortunately, we still remain at the stage of administrative-command, barracks socialism. We have not been able to overcome it yet despite all attempts at de-Stalinisation, *glasnost*, developing tendencies of democratisation and economic reform. Levelling-socialist ideals still serve, either in a latent or patent form, as the main values for an overwhelming majority of people. And quite a number of characteristic features of 'uprooted' consciousness—low standards of labour, ignorance, irresponsibility, voluntarism, etc.—have survived. In my opinion, it is this circumstance that serves as the main obstacle to *perestroika*.

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INTELLIGENTSIA: In the eighteenth and at the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, the educated strata was allied to power. Such a standpoint can be explained by their acceptance of the empire model; besides, it reflected the privileged interests of the nobility. But after the war of 1812 the situation changed. Having got familiar with the order in more developed countries during the European campaign, progressive-minded officers were staggered and embittered on realising the formidable backwardness of their own mother country. They returned home full of democratic ideas and large-scale plans of modernising Russia. Thus national self-consciousness as well as national intelligentsia were awakening.

Sir Isaiah Berlin described the phenomenon of Russian intelligentsia as 'the largest single Russian contribution to social change in the world'.[4] As a matter of fact even the term "intelligentsia" came into existence in Russia. If in the last century in Europe the notion "intelligence" meant intellectual, mental ability, in Russia it became associated with a certain social stratum or social force, not with just educated people, but with a group which stood opposed to power and in defence of the people, the interests of the nation at large and considered itself responsible for the future of its mother country and its development.

From the very start the Russian intelligentsia found itself in extremely difficult conditions. It constituted an insignificant minority of the population which was between the hammer and the anvil. It was confronted by a colossal repressive machinery of a police state. But it was also isolated from the common people by a very wide social and cultural gap which it failed to overcome during the nineteenth century. The Russian bourgeoisie which was weak economically and passive politically was not its ally either. To complete the picture, mention should be made of the fact that the Russian intelligentsia existed as though within two rather incompatible cultures—national and European. No wonder that its history is an incessant drama of ideas and events.

Hence the tremendous concentration of thought which gave birth sometimes to bold reformatory projects and sometimes to social Utopias. Hence revolutionary heroism of individuals and small groups which for a long time had to carry on their shoulders the liberation movement in the country. Hence an urge to create a specific revolutionary party which would be able to stand up to the struggle with a police state without broad support from below. Such an organisation finally founded by the Bolsheviks proved to be an effective instrument of struggle but at the same time it implied a potential danger of dictatorship.

The main problem facing the Russian intelligentsia consisted in overcoming national backwardness and helping Russia to join the European civilisation. The Decembrists tried to solve this problem in a direct way—"by shifting France to Russia", as Alexander Rosen, one of the members of the clandestine society of the Decembrists, remarked. On December 14, 1825 the Decembrist officers were very close to staging a military coup, abolishing serfdom and setting up a constitutional monarchy and,—who knows?—probably, assisting Russia to catch the departing European train. In any case they could have taken this opportunity, which was unique in the struggle of the intelligentsia against power right through the nineteenth century.

Undoubtedly, it would have been extremely difficult to exploit the opportunity—the Decembrists were much too isolated both from the people (who treated them as the nobles, the masters) and the bulk of the landowners, as well as the power structures that did not accept liberal ideas. Therefore, the defeat of the Decembrists was natural. It was perceived by the public opinion as a proof of the fact that it was impossible to implement purely enlightened, imitative projects of modernisation in Russia and that it was necessary "to interbreed" elements of European civilisation and national traditions on Russian soil.

For the first time the problem of such synthesis was formulated distinctly by the philosopher Pyotr Yakovlevich Chaadayev, an ex-Decembrist by the way. In his famous *Philosophical Letters*, Chaadayev very convincingly exposed the historical backwardness of Russia where despotism and serfdom had been ruining the creative energy of the nation. Europe, on the contrary, had advanced very far ahead due to its centuries-old cultural work and more humane political institutions. How could this lagging behind be done away with? Chaadayev gave the following answer: backwardness is not only a defect but also *an advantage*. Starting later than other countries a backward country can, first, profit by the already available achievements of the more developed countries (technology, economy, institutions, scientific thought, etc.). Second, the Russian civilisation is young in terms of history, its people are not burdened with longstanding traditions, they are simple-minded, ready to accept any idea. Finally, even slavery and the fact that the people have been accustomed to obedience can become a powerful factor of development if enlightened power makes use of it for the benefit of progress. Moreover, if Russia embarks upon this path it may well surpass the West.

Chaadayev's *Letters* are imbued with a striking combination of pessimism and optimism, national self-humiliation and nationalistic-Messianism. But this is why different social schools and political trends within the intelligentsia originated from his ideas. The Westernisers-liberals advocated the priority of European methods in the process of modernisation. Slavophiles, on the contrary, fell into the negation of cultural backwardness of Russia, though admitting technological backwardness. Contrasting "communal" Russia with "individualistic" Europe, A.S. Khomyakov, one of the founders of Slavophilism, said: "It would be a shame not to surpass Euorpe."[5]

As a matter of fact, staunch Slavophilism and occidentophilism, as any extreme trend, were not politically influential. But certain elements of them were synthesised peculiarly in the ideology of the revolutionary intelligentsia. For Hertzen the European experience was no longer embodied in bourgeois civilisation but in socialism as a natural outcome of the contradictions of European capitalism. The advantage of Russia's backwardness, according to Hertzen, consisted in the fact that Russia could bypass the bourgeois phase and build a socialist society on the basis of a peasant community (or a small producers' cartel). This theory was supported by Chernyshevsky, a well-known Russian thinker and publicist, and formed the basis of the *narodnik* movement.

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THUS, socialism had become for the revolutionary intelligentsia the sought-for formula of overcoming national backwardness in a shortest, straightened way. What was the role of the socialist idea in Russia? On the one hand, it orientated, in a more resolute way then other theories, towards implementation of urgent social transformations: abolition of landlord property rights, introduction of democratic freedoms (*narodnik* slogan "land and freedom"). Inspired by the socialist future, the intelligentsia directed its energy to seeking contacts with the masses involving them in social struggle). At the same time, socialism introduced the spirit of Utopia into the intelligentsia's environment which later had a number of consequences.

First, contempt for capitalism, the "mercenary" bourgeois civilisation; desire to bypass and skip over it as fast as possible. Naive faith in a just society that can be built according to collectivist traditions of the common people.

Second, revolutionary extremism, proclamation of violence as the principal method of struggle. From the point of view of Utopian consiousness it is quite logical: any price can be paid for the achievement of a perfect, ideal society. Moreover, a Utopian can easily pass from violence for the sake of the people to violence upon the people if they, in his opinion, are politically passive or oppose something that would be beneficial to them. Emergence of barracks socialism, the Utopias of Nechayev and Tkachev, etc., which I have mentioned above, revealed quite distinctly this logic of a Utopian rovolution.

Finally, socialism in Russia integrated in some way elements of great-power chauvinism and Messianism. Bearing in mind the feasibility of the socialist idea Hertzen supposed that "our untilled soil... is more suitable for sowing grain reaped from Western fields".[6] But a fairly ordinary *narodnik* believed that the Russian people "would be the first to witness the establishment of socialism on earth".[7] A little later, during the Marxist period these Messianic trends manifested themselves in the aspirations for the leading position of Russia in the world revolution.

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MARXISM represented a significant shift in the world outlook of the intelligentsia—both from the point of view of the efficiency of revolutionary movement and as regards the problem of overcoming national backwardness. It acknowledged the progressive nature of capitalism, the necessity of developing productive forces. It appealed to the working class which is more susceptible to revolutionary propaganda than the peasantry.

At the same time there developed very rapidly two trends in Russian Social Democracy. One of them, the Mensheviks were akin to the Westernisers and liberals. They considered that at that time Russia needed only a bourgeois-democratic revolution and further development of capitalism was required, while a socialist revolution might be a matter of the future. And their political influence proved insignificant just like that of the Russian liberals.

The Bolsheviks headed by Lenin were closer to reality, to the national political scene. They were aware of the fact that the Russian revolution, as well as further development of Russia, could not follow the European pattern primarily because of the acuteness of the agrarian crisis, general cultural backwardness of the country and because the Russian bourgeoisie was still in embryo. Relying upon the workers they, at the same time, were striving to involve the peasantry into the revolutionary movement. The Bolsheviks assumed that in a country of belated capitalism where social tension was similar to the steam accumulated in a boiler, revolution could well outgrow the limits of a bourgeois revolution. They were ready to make use of this circumstance. And history presented them with such an opportunity in 1917.

But at this stage differentiation, which was not very noticeable at first, was beginning to take place inside the Bolshevik wing. Having gained power a number of leaders and party functionaries began to move more and more to the Left towards the Utopia of barracks socialism. It occurred not only under the influence, often not realised, of a corresponding ideological tradition (Nechayev, Tkachev and others) but also in a unique historical situation when basic social structures had been destroyed paving the way for any, even the most fantastic, experiments.

The other group comprised the minority of "old Bolsheviks" headed by Lenin. Even though Lenin was "the Kremlin dreamer" as Herbert Wells called him and he had also been tempted by the ideas of 'War Communism' and aspirations for the world revolution. At the same time Lenin was a sober-minded man and possessed sound pragmatism of a politician. Considering socialism as the way to overcome national backwardness, Lenin was aware of the enormous complexity of this task. His strategic design was to gain power and on the basis of this power to set off catching up with other nations in the spheres of economy, politics and culture. With this aim it was planned not only to make good use of the technological achievements of the developed countries but also to develop mixed economy, to encourage free enterprise, to induce foreign capital and to carry out cooperation of the peasantry.

Were these prospects practicable? I think so. In any case, several years of NEP demonstrated the economic efficiency of the adopted course. Unfortunately, soon after NEP was proclaimed Lenin died. He did not have time to lay the foundation of the corresponding power structures which would contain elements of political pluralism necessary for expressing the interests of various population strata and for providing the implementation of the adopted economic programme. He did not have time to realise the imminent danger from the side of the declassed strata as the basis of barracks socialism either.

The advent of Stalinism then became a terrible tragedy for the whole country, especially for the intelligentsia. Not only because the regime of barracks socialism took away the lives of millions of people and destroyed primarily the intellectual nucleus of the nation. The tragedy consisted in the fact that to a certain extent Stalinism had been prepared by the activity of intelligentsia. The roots of Stalinism can be traced back to the times when the intelligentsia began to *worship* "the people"—peasants, workers or simply "the common people". When writers, even so prominent as Maxim Gorky, expressed their admiration of tramps and declassed people. When poets like Block and Bryusev greeted "the coming Hans". When thinkers and politicians dreamt of the socialist paradise to come where all old cultural traditions would be done away with. Of course, it would be unwise and irrational from the point of view of history to reproach the Russian intelligentsia with this—at least because it paid for its faults in full.

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AND now, almost three centuries after Peter's reform, we are approximately at the same point on the axis of world history. The window into Europe was opened long ago. Leo Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky and others who brought worldwide fame to Russian culture created their masterpieces. Sputniks and spaceships made on Russian soil are ploughing the space. But the country is still facing the problem of how to join the ranks of developed societies and the world civilisation.

Our situation is difficult. The inertia of past decades and even centuries is extremely strong. The empire model still appeals to a significant part of the leaders and the population. The society is tired of constant social strain, everyday inconveniences, propagandistic hypocrisy. Labour discipline is not improving, if anything it is deteriorating.

I have no panacea to offer. As a historian I can only draw a number of conclusions from the previous national experience. If we don't want the third *perestroika* to be like the two previous ones the sides of the triangle "power-intelligentsia-the people" should intersect. First of all, it is necessary to reject the empire model. As far as foreign policy is concerned, some important steps have been taken by the Soviet leadership in this direction. Now we have to apply the principles of new political thinking to our domestic affairs. Otherwise it would be impossible to solve those grave problems that have already arisen in a number of Soviet republics and that can become a great obstacle to *perestroika*.

Now an influential, though not a very numerous, contingent of the intelligentsia has formed in the USSR. It made a considerable contribution into the processes of democratisation, *glasnost* and renovation of thought. But re-estimation of values is only beginning. Many illusions have to be given up. Illusions that for a long time have tempted social thought in Russia: from age-long Russian Messianism, awareness of its "unique", "exceptional" nature, its exclusive influence on the rest of the world to the advantages of backwardness. Let us call things by their proper names: backwardness is backwardness and utilisation of the achievements of more developed states requires certain skills. And it is high time to admit that socialism which we have been cultivating since Stalin's time is an impasse and its only historical significance consists in the fact that it is a great lesson for the future both to us and to other nations. These conclusions may sound not very optimistic, but the sobering truth is better than new Utopian narcotics.

As regards "the people", the broad masses' cultural disorientation of mass consciousness, deterioration of moral standards, hard drinking, drug addiction and so on arouse the greatest concern. Where is the way out? Only in the awakening of the personality. And this process has already started. The writer Yury Chernichenko recently told the readers of *Literaturnaya Gazieta* the story of Ivan Rassokha, a peasant from Poltava. In the time of Brezhnev this man sank into degeneration, drank hard, idled. *Perestroika* gave him a chance and he decided, together with his son, to take a lease of a livestock farm. And he did this because of his awakened desire to prove that he means something as a personality, that he can really do something and not just rot, rather than earn a lot of money. That means that independent, spontaneous breaking away from the vicious circle of "uprooted" consiousness, its breakthrough into genuine human life. I imagine this case as a sort of a cell, a model of the people's rebirth. But this process should by all means be supported by the 'power', the system of propaganda and education.

Now Soviet society is faced with the necessity of largescale economic and political reforms aimed at elimination of the state monopoly of economic activities and the party monopoly of power. Non-standard solutions are required here. Today, just as in the times of the Decembrists and Chaadayev, Russia cannot carry out its modernisation following the pattern of Great Britain, France or the USA but only relying upon its own cultural traditions. Russian history does not teach only despotism and brutality. Among our traditions there is, for example, a tradition of penitence inherent in the Russian national character. We need it badly today, for without clearing ourselves of the negative legacy of the past, we shall not be able to advance. A Russian man has always been notable for his patience—we need it badly today, for we have, as Lenin said, "to learn to trade", to learn to raise labour standards, to acquire skills of political democracy and to learn many other things.

And here the aid of developed countries will be required. Undoubtedly, Russia begins the third *perestroika* in its history not in blank space. During the post-revolution years a powerful industry has been built up in our country, an overwhelming majority of the population is educated, large natural and human resources are at our disposal. But the West's awareness of our problems and difficulties, its readiness to take part in a productive political dialogue and economic assistance—all this will be very inportant for the Soviet Union.

To conclude, I would like to return to what I started with—the film *Andrei Rublyov*. There is an episode in the film: It is necessary to cast a bell for a new church, but nowhere can any master be found; all the adult villagers are either killed or captured by the Tartars. Quite accidentally a boy, the son of a master, is found. He had seen his father casting church bells. And the boy spares no pains to remember how his father worked. Guided by intuition he does everything right and his bell rings all through the neighbourhood as the creation of a genuine master. Something like this we must have with our *perestroika*. Under present-day conditions a man in Russia has to regenerate all his best traits and to enter our time boldly. Then the results will not be long in coming.

NOTES

1. G I Uspensky, *Selected Works*, Moscow, Leningrad, 1949, pp 381, 411-412
2. *Bosyachestvo*, literally barefooted people, means declassed lumpens
3. P.N Tkachev, *Selected Works*, Vol. III, Moscow, 1933, pp 253, 262, 265, 267-68
4. Isaiah Berlin, *Russian Thinkers*, Hammondsworth, Middlesex, 1978, p. 116
5. A S. Khomyakov, *Polnoye Sobraniye Sochinenii*, Vol III, Moscow, 1914, p 20
6. A.I Hertzen, *Sobraniye Sochinenii v 30 tomakh*, Vol XV, Moscow, 1957, p 148
7. S F Kovalick, *Revolutsionnoye Dvizheniye 70th godov i protses 193kh*, Moscow, 1928, p 110
8. V.I Lenin, *Polnoye Sobraniye Sochinenii*, Vol 45, p. 381

Indian Foreign Policy: Reorientation is Inevitable

AJAY K. MEHRA

This is another contribution to the discussion on our foreign policy initiated in Mainstream *(July 6, 1991) based on Partha Ghosh's "Post-Gulf War Foreign Policy: Need for Rethinking" (March 30, 1991) and R.C. Dutt's rejoinder "A Principled Foreign Policy" (June 1, 1991), the arguments of which were sought to be rebutted by Partha Ghosh in his "Foreign Policy: Status Quo or Change?" (July 6, 1991). Subsequently Anil Rajimwale joined the debate with his contribution "Foreign Policy: Reorientation is Need of the Hour" (September 21, 1991).*

The author is a Visiting Fellow, Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi.

—Editor

The Ghosh-Dutt debate on Indian foreign policy—Ghosh's "Post-Gulf War Foreign Policy: Need for Rethinking" (March 30, 1991), Dutt's plea for "A Principled Foreign Policy" (June 1, 1991) in his rejoinder to it and Ghosh's reply (July 6, 1991) "Foreign Policy: Status Quo or Change?"—is relevant and timely. But certainly we can indulge in this debate without calling each other "opportunist" or "status quoist". This, everyone would agree, hampers the spirit of free debate.

The debate raises some relevant and pertinent questions considering India's fumbled responses to the fast paced and momentous changes sweeping the globe. What should be the basis and objectives of the Indian foreign policy under the circumstances? Should it be based on considerations of realpolitik, or should it follow certain professed principles? Should the objectives of the Indian foreign policy under the quickly shifting international scenario be a cold-blooded pursuit of national interest, or a high profile moralistic posture against the imperialist and hegemonist West? And, in case we attempt to achieve some kind of a balance between the two, and succeed in this difficult endeavour, how do we reconcile them in a clash situation?

It must be admitted at the very outset that the choice between a principled position on world affairs and a national interest based foreign policy is not zero-sum. For national interest is normally one of the underlying principles of any foreign policy; and howsoever "principled" a foreign policy is it cannot afford to compromise on national interest. Moreover, the conduct of diplomacy and the practice of foreign policy can rarely be divorced from realpolitik. It is surprising that the role of realpolitik in international politics is under dispute in the land of Chanakya!

II

INDIA's foreign policy and her role on the world stage during the recent events has been confounding, to say the least. It betrays the logic of "principles" as well as that of "realpolitik". The result, however, has been that we have been reduced to less than passive onlookers on the world stage. Worse, we had had to face the embarrassment of a condescending "don't bother" from the superpower we consider such a villain in world affairs.

The present author happened to be in the United States during the momentous days of "Operation Desert Shield" and "Operation Desert Storm"; during the days when the Soviet Union was trying hard, to the discomfiture of President Bush, to avert the war; during the days when George Bush was confounding the world with his New World Order (NWO); during the days when the intellectual community in the USA was debating the shape of the post-post-Cold War world; during the days when the Gorbachev-Yeltsin battle of nerves was heating up in Moscow and the Americans were gleefully commenting on the collapse of the evil communism. As a member of an international group being exposed to the US foreign policy process, the author also had the privilege of interacting with some of the leading persons from the policy-making community as well as some of the front-ranking opinion-makers in the US capital between January and June 1991.

Painfully for us, India found no mention in this whole debate either for her role or participation, in the peacemaking effort, or for her unequivocal position on this crisis. We were perfunctorily mentioned for abstaining in the UNO and when we invited a condescending "don't bother, we understand your domestic compulsion" from George Bush on the refuelling controversy. We were not good enough even for a criticism!

Since many in this country have a negative, sometimes hostile, view of the USA as a symbol of the imperialist West, it might not bother us that:

> When the White House published a paper recently, outlining the "National Security Strategy of the United States", it barely mentioned India. When the coup in the Soviet Union happened, George Bush called a number of world capitals to discuss the crisis but did not call New Delhi.[1]

But how do we react to the following?

> When a beseiged Boris Yeltsin asked for international support, he probably did not expect any from India which is why he did not care to dial the 91 country cold. When Mikhail Gorbachev could lay hands on a telephone after his captivity, he called a few world leaders but apparently could not find the time to speak with the Indian leaders, despite our long friendship with the Soviet Union...[2]

Don't these facts reflect our complete marginalisation in world politics?

South Asia in general and India in particular have remained a low priority area for the USA, the invisible "foreign hand" and "destabilisation" psychosis gripping us since Mrs Gandhi's days notwithstanding.[3] Our geo-strategic position has not changed. If anything, the end of the Cold War and turmoil in the Soviet Union has reduced our geo-strategic importance even further.

The US concerns in the region are rather negative—Indo-Pakistan tension, nuclear proliferation, human rights, intellectual property rights and so on. These priorities are not likely to change in the near future and determine the course of Indo-US relationship.[4] If we still have any misconception regarding our importance for the US, we should look at the New York based Council on Foreign Relations' assessment of "America and the World 1990-91". The 1991 issue of this important US think tank's prestigious publication, *Foreign Affairs,* devoted to the above subject neither contains an article devoted to India (or South Asia) nor (even perfunctorily) mentions either of the two.[5]

III

THERE are two dimensions of our marginalisation in world politics—geopolitical and the conduct of foreign policy. It is obvious that we can do little regarding how we are located on the world map and how our region figures in the geo-strategic considerations of the world powers. But it would be stating the obvious that how we assert our importance through the substance and conduct of our foreign policy is entirely in our own hands.

And, we have generally done it, with a few lapses, pretty well during the Nehru era, and not too badly during the Indira Gandhi years. Even though the facade of principle was always a component of our foreign policy, the motive force most of the time was national interest; hence realpolitik was adroitly mixed with, if not took precedence over, principles. Therefore, while the principles involved in the non-aligned movement (NAM) should not be undermined, it would be equally wrong to ignore or underplay its realpolitik dimension. Dulles' branding of the NAM as immoral reflected frustration over its realpolitik dimension and disapproval of the shroud of morality wrapped around it. And, we cannot say, on either count, that it did not pay us dividends in world affairs. Not only a nation as young as India emerged as an important voice in world affairs, her foreign policy became synonymous with the voice of the Third World.

It would be wrong as much to fault our leaders for being governed by realpolitik in shaping Indian foreign policy, as for using the cloak of principles to make it more presentable and acceptable. But, as stated earlier, while no one would grudge a nation to pursue national interest through foreign policy as long as certain broad principles of coexistence are not undermined, blowing either principles or national interest out of proportions is generally resented.

In our case, for example, overemphasis on principles has created a self-righteous streak in our national personality that has not been appreciated by the international community. It has not done much good to us either. In the case of the Kashmir question, for example, was it not a self-righteous confidence of moral superiority that made Nehru accept the advice to take the question to the UNO? And, to what consequence?

Dulles' characterisation of non-alignment as immoral too, as stated earlier, was a reflection of indignation over moralistic posture over a realpolitik move. Zhou Enlai, it has been recorded, did not quite relish when Nehru with a big-brotherly magnanimity tried to take him "under his wings" during the Bandung Conference of 1955. He resented this "arrogance" even at the height of the *Hindi-Chinee bhai bhai* days.[6]

Years later, when India's non-aligned stance seemed considerably watered down due to a treaty of friendship with the Soviet Union, India's moralistic stance was absolutely unpalatable to the West. Nixon, for example, had a distaste for Mrs Gandhi's moral posture in dealing with him. As Henry Kissinger has recalled:

> ...Nixon and Mrs Indira Gandhi...were not intended by fate to be personally congenial. Her assumption of almost hereditary moral superiority and her moody silences brought out all of Nixon's latent insecurities. Her bearing toward Nixon combined a disdain for a symbol of capitalism quite fashionable in developing countries...[7]

Not only leaders of the stature of Nehru and Mrs Gandhi, Kissinger's memoirs reflect resentment also of "the hectoring tone of moral superiority with which Indian diplomats sometimes exhaust if not the goodwill, at least the patience of their interlocutors".[8]

Today an honest evaluation clearly shows a smugness in our self-perception, an exaggerated notion of our importance in world politics. Remember the comical mission of Rajiv Gandhi to solve the Gulf crisis! Others, however, feel that "India is nowhere into new power equations".[9] A pathetic situation for a nation inhabiting one seventh of the humanity!

IV

THE Indian response to both the Gulf crisis and the coup in Moscow last August further undermined the country's position in world politics. As we analyse our forgettable diplomatic *faux pas,* it seems that on both the occasions aside from other factors, the self-imposed dichotomy between "principles" and "realpolitik" also played a significant role.

It is true that the response to the Gulf crisis was a very delicate diplomatic choice, given our relationship with Iraq, millions of Indians working in Kuwait, our stand against the big power involvement and, of course, unstable political situation in the country. It was a critical test that our leaders failed.

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was against our stated principles of foreign policy as well as self-interest. Haven't we frequently raised our voice for the protection of small states against the encroachment of the big ones? Moreover, considering millions of Indians employed in Kuwait, whom we very efficiently evacuated, would it not have been prudent on our part to disapprove of, if not condemn in strong words, Saddam's misadventure? Did we, in keeping silent, in our wildest dream imagine Iraq to permanently annex Kuwait and expect the US and other big powers to keep quiet? Or, were we expecting big benefit to accrue from the annexation of Kuwait?

Our judgement also faltered in determining whether the US role was a big power involvement or the intervention approved by the world body. Some may think that George Bush hijacked the UNO, but it is equally true that by seeking UN approval for his actions he also gave it the importance that it has rarely enjoyed in recent times. Moreover, it would not have been difficult for the US to liberate Kuwait singlehanded. By constituting a multinational force for the purpose, President Bush successfully transformed it into a global issue. Agreed, the USA was guided by her actions leave many questions unanswered from the democratic point of view.[10] Still the US stance was far more principled than Iraq's.

We also seem to miss the point that by creating a situation for the US involvement in regional affairs, it is Saddam Hussein who has done a great disservice to the Third World. Even if he wanted to prove a point against Kuwait, he had several occasions for a diplomatic withdrawal, but he decided not to relent. Further, if we accept the argument that the decline of the USSR has shut down a forum of appeal for the Third World, Saddam has made a contribution in the dismantling of that forum. His rebuff to Gorbachev's peace initiative was a blow to the Soviet prestige and it legitimised the role of the US and her Western allies in the Gulf theatre.

R.C. Dutt is right when he says that the personality of Saddam Hussein is not under debate here. But it is not completely out of context for our debate that he is a dictator. Nor is the fact that in spite of his secular and democratic pretense, he has silenced all the dissent in his country and his Baath Party is known to have spread a reign of terror in Iraq with few parallels; and his secularism was too fragile to withstand the pressure of the war he himself started. His persecution of minority Kurds is too well-known to merit a detailed discussion here. In sum, any way we look at the support to Saddam Hussein, the argument would seem to rest on thin ice.

The ambiguity and confusion enveloping Indian foreign policy was evident also during the abortive overthrow of Gorbachev. Whether Indian reaction was based on principles of realpolitik, it did not do any good to national interest.

From the Iraqi annexation of Kuwait through the Operation Desert Storm to the coup in the Soviet Union, three different governments, three different Prime Ministers, three different Foreign Ministers and three different political parties were at the helms. But the response to each of the events was confusing. This indicates a similarity of approach or consensus in dealing with foreign policy among the political parties. In fact, the hullabaloo raised on the refuelling facilities to the American planes and Rajiv Gandhi's diplomatic sojourn on the Gulf crisis also demonstrated our capacity to confound this confusion further. Sure, this consensus and political energies can be channelised constructively for a coherent foreign policy.

The NAM was India's brainchild. It is facing irrelevance and extinction today. Instead of shouting from the rooftop about its relevance and inviting sneers, India should think about its reorientation in the current world order. True, we do not have a Nehru on our political firmament today. But we do have a pool of foreign policy analysts, ideologues and a diplomatic corps that could be envied by any country. Should we not use their combined talent to draw a new agenda for the NAM with a prominent role for India? R.C. Dutt is right that pro- or anti-Americanism is not the issue. Then, while we judge the issues on merit, we should not hesitate to collaborate with the USA where needed and criticise her where she deserves. We should also not ignore the fact that the USA has emerged as a symbol of democracy and liberty, irrespective of her global involvements as a superpower. That is why every voice of democracy is sought to be raised in the US Congress. Why should we hesitate to make our voice echo there, especially when we have sympathetic ears and vocal support available?

It is also true, as Ghosh has asserted, that as long as we are economically weak, we are politically vulnerable. Howsoever we may resent others' "pressures", "humiliating conditions" and "interference" on our policy matters, we cannot avoid them with a begging bowl in our hand. Hence, without getting into the chicken and egg controversy, we should move towards independence and self-sufficiency.■

NOTES

1. Gautam Adhikari, "Rethinking Foreign Policy: Change Needed for India's Sake", *The Times of India*, September 2, 1991.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Paul Kreisberg, a former US career diplomat who has served in India for a long time, and a South Asia expert, told the author in an interview:

   > South Asia...is so far away from the scene and has no strategic importance...you look at the map of South Asia...It is a land mass pointing to nowhere, to Antarctica maybe. It cannot serve any strategic purpose for the US.

4. The author's conversations in the State Department in April 1991. Richard Haase, the Senior Director, in the National Security Council, indirectly admitted the neglect of South Asia by the USA in a speech before the Asia Society in New York in January, 1990. There was a tinge of big brotherliness when he said that "South Asia demands our attention because of potential for conflict" c.f. A US Government handout.
5. *Foreign Affairs*, 70(1), New York, Council on Foreign Relations, 1991.
6. A decade after the Bandung conference of 1955 Zhou Enlai recalled to some Pakistani journalists how Nehru quite openly tried to take him under his wings. "Indians have often recalled this as one more incident meriting Chinese gratitude, but to the Chinese it must have appeared as the height of presumption, the recollection of the incident could still irritate Zhou ten years later." Neville Maxwell, *India's China War*, Bombay, Jaico, 1971, p. 261.
7. Henry Kissinger has also observed somewhat appreciatively about Mrs Gandhi: "Once one cut through the strident, self-righteous rhetoric, Mrs. Gandhi had few peers in the cold-blooded calculations of the elements of power." *The White House Years*, New Delhi, Vikas, 1979, p. 848.
8. *Ibid*, p. 866.
9. *India Today*, October 15, 1991.
10. See, for example, an excellent review of the recent US action in the Gulf from the point of view of democratic theory by Richard Falk, "Reflections on Democracy and the Gulf War", *Alternatives*, 16(2), Spring 1991, pp. 263-74; and another critical examination of the US role by Martin Walker, "Dateline Washington: Victory and Delusion", *Foreign Policy*, No. 83, Summer 1991, pp. 160-72.

OCTAVIO PAZ: Smile of Buddhist Sages

(Continued from page 5)

a little irony in his dealings with himself and others—he should be less sure of himself, know that he does not possess infallible recipes, and recognise that there are no absolute truths. And through the practice of meta-irony, keep a hold on compassion and pity.

The vile dictatorships which we have endured in the twentieth century have been rooted in merciless ideologies. I can accept that many of them, as in the case of Stalin, were perversions of altruistic doctrines, but it must also be admitted that these doctrines contained the seeds of despotism and intolerance.

In their profound wisdom, the theologians of old considered pride to be the sin of Satan. Among mankind, this sin is born of the claim to possess absolute truth. It is an evil which has poisoned the twentieth century in the guise of science and philosophy.

Criticism is the only antidote to this moral poison. When people understand that they do not possess the absolute truth and that all truths, especially political truths, are relative, then there is room for irony and pity—towards others and towards themselves. This is what our century lacks—a resurrection of pity. One of the most beautiful features of Buddhism is that Buddhist sages are always smiling. And their smile expresses irony and pity...The smile of the Buddhist sages should be introduced into politics. ■

(Courtesy: *UNESCO Courier*)

Remembering Our Beloved Batukda

AJIT KUMAR DUTTA

Had he been living, he would have completed eighty this winter. An illuminating personality, marked by an affable nature and comprehensive mind, he easily won friends wherever he went. More than suave manners and witty comments, he was a talented person, noted for versatility. If his admirers in Calcutta recently gathered together to pay tribute to his hallowed memory, Delhi too has reason to remember him gratefully for his contribution to the Capital's cultural scene during his long stay here spanning almost two decades.

Jyotirindra Moitra (1911-1977), just Batukda to a vast number, young and old, was a man of many interests. A science graduate, due to his literary inclination he ultimately took his master's degree in literature. If his early years in the vicinity of the vast and vigorous Padma and the greenness around moulded his mind in one way, the liberal family tradition helped him to develop a rare rational outlook and finer sensibilities. No wonder a stage came when instead of taking chartered accountancy articleship seriously, he could be found observing birds and studying their whistles with more attention. An uncaring type and an artist at heart, his life's course was destined to be far from the ordinary.

He came to be noted as a poet initially. He emerged on the scene at a time of turmoil—the Second World War, famine. and fast-changing values, in which context his *Madhu Bansi's Gali* (A Blind Alley Tale), did not merely attain significance, but earned for him a distinct place in the realm of Bengali poetry, with his pieces finding regular inclusion in the anthologies of modern poems. Incidentally, his *gali* ultimately came out in a disc with voice by renowned Sombhu Mitra.

But the poet was soon overtaken by the musician in him. Not that he ceased writing, he began devoting more time to music, as was borne out by his regular training under the eminent musicians like Bhishmadev Chattopadhyaya for the *shastriya* kind and Indiradevi Chaudhurani and Anadi Dastidar for *Rabindrasangeet*. His wide grasp was soon acknowledged, specially for his contribution in the area of choral music reaching culmination in the now famous *Nava Jibaner Gaan* or Life's New Music, subsequently made popular through the IPTA or people's theatre movement. In this, he set tune to his own words, in the tradition of Tagore, Nazrul and Atul Prasad.

In a sense Batukda proved himself akin to the little bird—a poetic creation of his own—that kept on building nests hardly settling down at one place for long. Maybe due to inner restlessness, he too moved on from Calcutta to Bombay and from there to some quiet spot in Bihar and later to Delhi, thanks to well-wishers and friends like Nirmala Joshi, Govind Vidyarthi and others prevailing upon him. But here too circumstances in the end compelled him to wind up.

Batukda's Delhi years saw him primarily confined to the Bharatiya Kala Kendra productions as its Music Director. His musical scores for its famous Ram Lila, which still form the core, according to experts, could be considered as his most significant contribution—noted for melody and richness in vocal aspects. In the opinion of Narendra Sharma, an eminent choreographer and who corroborated with Batukda on several occasions, Batukda himself being a man of literature could easily attend to and produce dramatic music. That ensured his success as the creator of music in ballets.

Batukda left yet another distinctive mark when he composed music for *Lambakarna Pala*, a Parasuram story, dramatised by Abanindranath Tagore. Besides Delhi, it was staged in Calcutta, earning accolades, for its music in particular, from discerning audiences. For his unusual sense and grip over music, Batukda was much sought after and with his friendly attitude he readily extended his help. Out of deep respect and close relationship with poet Bishnu Dey, a friend and compatriot, Batukda got involved and was somewhat innovative in providing music to a mime-based stage production in Delhi, on the occasion of Bishnu Babu's receiving the Jnanpith Award. It may be mentioned here that similarly at different times he cooperated with film-makers like Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Ghatak and James Ivory.

Easy and intimate as were his ways, it surely was a tribute to his winning manners that a kid of about ten considered his company worth seeking. To the youngster, he was an amazing personality. He appeared to be a storehouse of information relating to bird-watching, cricket and diverse kinds of anecdotes. The young admirer therefore could describe this *Jethu* of his as the Most Impressive Character for his class essay. Luckily the teacher too appreciated the off-beat approach and read out the essay in the class for the benefit of other students.

The bugbear of poetry really never left him. Though not immensely productive, the Delhi phase witnessed him taking up pen at intervals depending on needs (while waiting, on a bank pay-in slip emerged a piece, a friend testified once). With a flair for *adda*, he took the initiative for literary exchanges, by launching a wall-magazine, *Ajanta*. He suggested the name and the opening line of his first poem there read: "Here the fawn of life plays gleefully in the green of the forest". Thanks to his inspiration and an initiated group behind him, the venture soon took a printed form. The magazine is still in existence and sometime back to celebrate its silver jubilee, a seminar on Little Magazine was organised in which writers in Hindi, Oriya, Assamese, Tamil and Malayalam, based in Delhi, participated. It can also be mentioned here that before Batukda's departure from Delhi, the Karol Bagh organisation he was associated with—the Bangiya Samsad—and publishers of the *Ajanta*, presented him an anthology of his own select poems written here, in the form of a regular publication titled *Ye Pathei Yao* (Whichever way you go). That made him immensely happy as it did many others.

.Far from an ivory tower dweller, guided by a sense of duty and social awareness, he often took pragmatic approach to things. For many passersby, it was a sight, to see him leading groups of musicians along the busy Ajmal Khan Road and adjoining areas to help raising relief funds for occasional floods and droughts in one or other part of the country.

In parallel with his growing stature in the field of music, his young friends like Nemi Chand Jain and others, primarily through translations, helped him to come closer to the mainstream. Although he hardly bothered whether he became known or was accepted in certain circles, his admirers hardly thought so. Hence they all felt elated when Batukda was honoured and publicly felicitated by Delhi's Sahitya Kala Parishad, for his valuable contribution in enriching the Capital's cultural scene.

One may say that the same carefree attitude, rather a poetic fancy, prevailed when he made his final exit from this world. He breathed his last in sleep during a train journey. By the time the train reached Howrah, Batukda had already left for another destination! ■

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY **Punjab Poll**

(Continued from page 3)

drove through the streets of Amritsar, unarmed and unescorted by a wall of security guards. V.P. Singh's promise of early elections touched the heart of millions of Sikhs, and preparations were seriously afoot for an early poll. Even a new Governor, with the image of a man of peace, was sent—further strengthening the V.P. Singh Government's credentials in the eyes of the alienated Sikhs.

However, the elections were put off because of the opposition of the two parties backing V.P. Singh's National Front Government, namely, the BJP and the Left, both of whom vetoed any early elections in Punjab, and V.P. Singh yielded before their pressure—a folly which he has since regretted and has said so in public.

Not only was the abandonment of elections in early 1990 a mistake, it was compounded by a total policy drift without any clear-cut perspective on the part of the National Front Government. The fund of goodwill that it commanded in Punjab was dissipated. Here too, the concern to keep the Haryana politics on the right side—with Devi Lal in high visibility—led to the abdication of any serious efforts at handling the Punjab crisis.

After the fall of the V.P. Government, there was the promise of a breakthrough under Chandra Shekhar. In spite of the precarious tenure of his Prime Ministership, Chandra Shekhar made a positive contribution by exploring the possibility of opening a dialogue with the militants, apart from maintaining a friendly rapport with the Akali leaders. There is little doubt that had he been able to run his government, he would have achieved a breakthrough in Punjab. His decision to hold elections in Punjab which the then Governor, General Malhotra, assiduously prepared for, was however opposed by Rajiv Gandhi, who rather thoughtlessly announced that the Congress would not participate in it—a decision which was known to have been taken without serious discussion with the leaders of the Congress in Punjab.

This was the main reason why the Narasimha Rao Government got the entire poll cancelled in June. Because, if the poll had taken place at that time, it would have meant the total absence of the Congress-I from the new Assembly after the poll—which would have meant largely a political holiday for the Congress in Punjab for the next five years. The abrupt announcement of poll postponement at the very last moment gave fresh impetus to the militants' propaganda that New Delhi was not prepared to hold any poll at all, as it could not trust the prospect of an elected government in Punjab.

It needs to be realised that the Punjab crisis has gone far beyond the framework of a normal political problem. It calls for unorthodox approaches and rather determined will. For instance, speculation was common in Congress circles last summer when Rajiv Gandhi declared his party's non-participation in the poll—which, incidentally, compelled Narasimha Rao to seek the countermanding of elections last June—that the elections would return the militants as the majority group in the Assembly where they would pass a resolution declaring independence and announcing the establishment of Khalistan; this would mean real secession from our Republic. This hair-raising scenario is not difficult to dismiss. Even in the poor voter-turnout in the 1989 Lok Sabha election, which was dominated by the militants' intervention, the poll results showed that the majority of the voters did not favour the militants; rather those who were opposed to the militants line got the major share of votes polled. If that was the situation in 1989, there is little doubt that the hard-core pro-Khalistani elements will not be able to dominate the scene, and the Assembly that will be returned would be largely dominated by the more sensible among the militants, who would like Punjab to be within the Indian Union, but with more powers in the hands of the State authorities. The bogey of secession through poll need not therefore be taken too seriously.

It is in this background that one has to understand the full import of Narasimha Rao's cryptic observation before the National Integration Council that any further postponement beyond February 15 would cost the very credibility of his government —before the people of Punjab. It is reported that a section of the higher echelons of the Punjab police wants to delay the poll on the execuse that they would require more time to muzzle the militants. One only hopes that the Home Minister and the Prime Minister would firmly stick to their commitment of the election deadline on February 15.

The common concern of all parties is that the elections this time must be really representative, that the voter turnout must be at least near-normal and not just nominal.

To ensure a sizeable voter turnout and also to make it possible for the Akali leaders to overcome their present stand of boycotting the poll, the Narasimha Rao Government will have to take some immediate steps. For one thing, an overture to the militants, at least to the more amenable among them, has to be made, open or covert, to neutralise any outright attack on the poll. Secondly, it is imperative for the Prime Minister to make a solemn promise that Chandigarh would be handed over to Punjab without delay—preferably as a prelude to the poll, which is bound to have a tremendous psychological impact. The transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab must not be linked with any transfer of areas to Haryana on linguistic grounds, which is a totally separate issue. For Haryana to have Chandigarh, it can be granted an adequate sum for building a capital of its own. As for the question of sharing river water as also the transfer of areas on linguistic principle, the Centre can announce immediate reference to Supreme Court for making the necessary awards after examining the respective claims of the two neighbouring States.

From a wider angle, the Punjab crisis demands a clear enunciation by the Narasimha Rao Government of approach to the question of the Centre-State relations. Not only in Punjab, it is unquestionably the most pressing demand from almost all parts of the country—from Assam to Maharashtra, from Kerala to West Bengal.

This really requires a promise to have a thorough second look at the Constitution itself to ensure a more authentic federal set-up. Such a move should be able to enlist all-party support since the major parties in Parliament are running State Governments, and they regard this as a crying need. In fact, a more federal structure would be more than half-way towards bringing peace in Punjab and possibly to Kashmir as well.

It is to be recognised that if the Narasimha Rao Government can successfully hold the elections on the promised date, it will help to bring confidence to a large section of the people in the Kashmir Valley that New Delhi is serious about restoring genuine democratic process instead of continued dependence on the power of the gun, which has already turned out to be counter-productive.

The holding of elections in Punjab on the promised date is thus of far-reaching significance for Indian democracy. ■

(This is an enlarged version of the article written by the author in The Hindustan Times, *January 9, 1992.)*

On Women and Supremacy of English Press

SARALA JAG MOHAN

Women have been facing insurmountable problems all through the centuries. They do so even now, when the world is not very far from entering the twentyfirst century. However, there is greater awareness about women's problems today, thanks not only to the enlightened activities by various women's organisations all over the country, but also to equally englightened writing on the subject by several writers. One among these writers is Mrinal Pande, a former lecturer in English, but now a "militant Hindi editor" (currently of the *Saptahik Hindustan*) and an active feminist. She is a very articulate journalist, who has contributed articles to many Hindi and English journals and periodicals. She has voiced her firm and uncompromising views both about women's problems and various aspects concerning print and electronic media, expressing her ire not only against the wrong projection of women in the mass media but also against the domination of the English language press.

The Subject is Woman by Mrinal Pande; Sanchar Publishing House, New Delhi; 1991; pp. 160; Rs 160.

The Subject is Woman, a collection of articles on these topics, is an expression in capsule form of Mrinal Pande's firm convictions as a woman and as a journalist, As Khushwant Singh writes in his foreword to the book, it is a "focus on Indian women and the world around in which they live." But it is not just that. Mrinal Pande dwells on the "decomposing dictatorship of English which has a demoralising effect on what she calls "vernacular" journalism, and also pushes down non-English programmes on television.

The book begins with a very touching portrayal of her maternal grandmother, Amma, a "strong-willed matriarch who also staunchly upheld patriarchal values". In this depiction of her Amma, Mrinal Pande describes the "transformation of a tomboyish seven-year-old girl into a prematurely grey matriarch", and thereby narrates the story of Indian women in general. It also sets the readers' mood, who are eager to see what she has to say in the pages that follow—and indeed she says a lot. However, in her introduction, she has made a statement that cannot go undisputed. "History of women's experiences," she says, "reveals that it is not power that corrupts, but powerlessness". Now it is true that powerlessness corrupts, but it is also true that power corrupts equally and here, Mrinal Pande does stand to be corrected.

However, the author's approach to the problems of women in rural and urban areas at various social levels is absolutely realistic and her advocacy of a common civil code, particularly in the light of the infamous Shah Bano case is unexceptionable. So is her defence of the feminist movement in India which, according to some sceptical people, is a concept imported from the West and irrelevant in the hisotrical and present-day context of the life of the Indian woman. Whether one calls it feminism or something else, there is such a thing as disability of Indian women, who despite the constitutional guarantee of equality and protection against discrimination, do suffer from grave injustices in their various fields of activity. The media, on the whole, tend to perpetuate the feminine mystique and glorify the meek and submissive woman. Advertisements in newspapers and on television use women as ploys to promote their respective products.

Everything that Mrinal Pande has written about such problems needs to be taken seriously not only by men but by women themselves. She has dealt with those problems with great concern and even anguish and it should stir the conscience of all right-minded people and provoke them to do something about it. Only, her discussion about woman's image in films and theatre, despite her correct approach, do not have the same depth as in her other articles. They appear rather specimens of scattered writing.

Her vehement argument against the supremacy of the English press because of its enormous advertisement revenue and its self-appointed mission of forming the national opinion, are likely to cause discomfort to those engaged in English journalism. But she has a point that needs to be considered by those who see intellectual and cultural superiority—only in what is written in English. For one thing, the language press is highly disadvantaged and because of the paucity of financial resources, cannot match the English press in terms of quality of production. But contentwise, the language press does not lack in quality to the extent it is generally presumed. Just as good literature is produced not only in Hindi but in most Indian languages, language journalism is not exactly lagging far behind English journalism. Mrinal Pande's advocacy of Hindi journalism is understandable. Nobobdy can or should take exception to that. What is not very clearly coming through in her book is the link she tries to establish between the primacy of the English language and the disadvantaged position of the Indian woman. And when she talks about "feminisation of poverty" people are bound to respond to it with scepticism for, poverty is poverty for the vast majority of Indian masses and it knows no sex. What is really true is that while men are crushed by conditions of poverty, women suffer more because they are bogged down by tradition and social conventions and do not have the same scope and freedom to find escape for themselves like men.

But these are the points on which there can be more views than one. And if Mrinal Pande has taken a particular view, that is her privilege as a writer, journalist, social worker and an individual. The important thing is that she has given a new thrust to the debate going on about women's condition in the country and a shock-treatment to the barons of English journalism, which they need very badly. ■

SEEMA: A Secular, Centrist Alternative

(Continued from page 4)

Ayodhya emerged as the breaking points and the Left leaders joined the NF in launching a scathing attack on the Narasimha Rao Government on these issues. The chasm has widened since and now the CPI-M has gone many steps further in making it clear that it will have no truck with the Congress-I Government And that it can work to bring the government down even if it means an election that the people do not really want. The CPI is at one with this with its members admitting that the BJP and the Congress-I are now functioning openly as two sides of the same coin. The brief honeymoon with Rao is over and the Left parties have decided to strike out on their own while continuing support to the National Front and the beleaguered Janata Dal under V P. Singh

There is no rethinking on this. That is, there is no rethinking on the fact that a second secular, Centrist alternative is the need of the hour And there is also a growing realisation that the National Front which had started as an experiment to bring together secular and progressive forces on one platform has not grown sufficiently to answer this need. The challenge posed by communal forces, aided and abetted by the Centrist elements, can only be countered by an aggressive secular party committed to the tenets that form the basis of our Constitution Secularism to be revived has to enter the streets through an aggressive campaign by a political party with an essentially Centrist image. There can be no truck with Hindu or Muslim fundamentalists, no appeasement or pampering of any such group or individual if the politics of secularism is to succeed. Leaders will also have to sink their petty egos to work at an organisaton which can answer the political and economic needs of the country.

Correction

In "Fiji: Institutionalised Racial Discrimination" by Shanti Sadiq Ali published in *Mainstream* (December 28 1991) a slight error has crept in The fourth sentence on para two, column two, page 19 should read as follows:

"However, they were brought into Fiji precisely for this purpose, but given short leases of 10 years which have kept them insecure, and many of them turned to food crops."

The error is regretted

— Editor

It is clear that the Congress-I as it has evolved through the years is not the party to answer these aspirations. It is also becoming amply clear that big business in this country (and abroad) would like a two party system—the choices being limited to the BJP and the Congress-I. There is growing resistance to the emergence of a third alternative, and a combined effort by industrialists, a section of the media and other vested interests to crush the third force in its infancy The petty egos of leaders in the Janata Dal and National Front have of course helped this attempt by the vested interests, and today the secular experiment which had sufficiently enthused the people of this country at one stage, is in danger of breaking up. It can be saved, if the constituents respond to concerns larger than their egos, and understand that their own political survival is linked to the survival of the country A Herculean effort is needed, not only to save the National Front from disintegration, but to reconstitute, re-activise it into facing the challenges along the lines outlined in its manifesto.

The writing on the wall is bleak but very clear: only a second, secular, progressive political force can save the country from chaos and ultimate ruin. Those drawing lessons from the events in the Soviet Union should realise that it was the inability of the Soviet leadership to handle the genesis of the problem that led to the break-up of that country. *Hindutva* and rank communalism will only split the country, not unite it. Irresponsible liberalisation will further squeeze our weaker sections. Myopic politicians are steering the country towards self-destruction. Wanted is the will and vision, reminiscent of the freedom struggle, to revive the fundamental aspects of the Constitution. It is possible still, but it needs a lot of good men to get together, to sink individual ambitions and for once, to put the country before themselves. ■

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Republic Day Special

Mainstream

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The problems which India faces are to some extent common to other countries, but we have new problems for which there are no parallels or historical precedents elsewhere. What has happened in the past in the industrially advanced countries has little bearing on us today. As a matter of fact, the countries that are advanced today were economically better off than India today, in terms of per capita income, before their industrialisation began. Western economics, therefore, though helpful, have little bearing on our present-day problems. So also have Marxist economics which are in many ways out of date even though they throw a considerable light on economic processes. We have thus to do our own thinking, profiting by the example of others, but essentially trying to find a path for ourselves suited to our own conditions.

In considering these economic aspects of our problems we have always to remember the basic approach of peaceful means; and perhaps we might also keep in view the old Vedantic ideal of the life force which is the inner base of everything that exists.

Jawaharlal Nehru

B.K. NEHRU ❖ UPENDRA BAXI ❖ YOGINDER K. ALAGH ❖ MRINALINI SARABHAI ❖ SEEMA MUSTAFA ❖ RANDHIR SINGH

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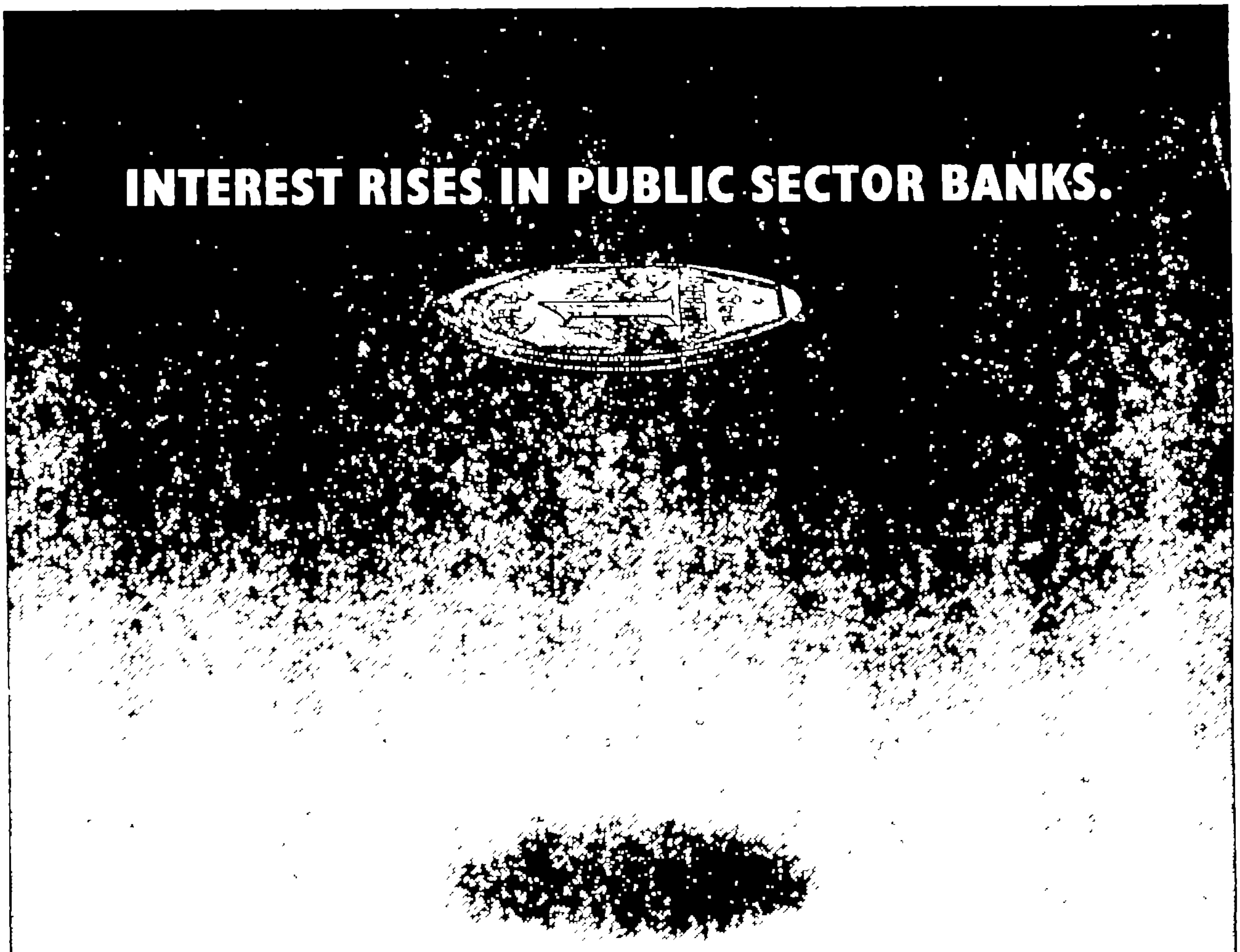
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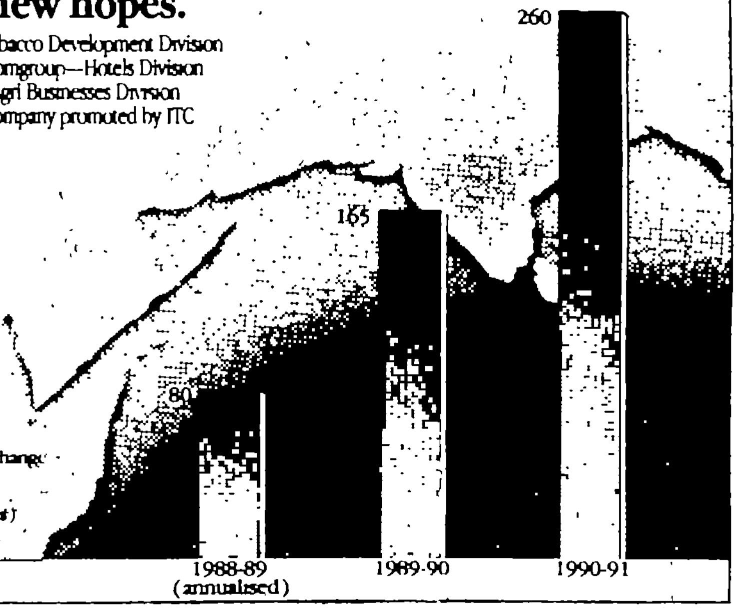

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VOL XXX NO 14 **Mainstream** JANUARY 25, 1992

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

The Hour of Challenge

Under dark, lowering clouds the Republic Day is being celebrated this year marking the fortysecond year since the proclamation of our secular, democratic order. There are physical assaults on the integrity of the Republic, there are insidious forces undermining with impunity its very fabric from inside.

With all its shortcomings and drawbacks our democratic set-up is still maintained. But it is being grievously corroded by mega-size corruption in public life. The electoral process itself is being openly subverted by large-scale violence by anti-social gangs acting as hirelings of political parties.

Regional, ethnic loyalties have been raising their heads challenging the supremacy of the central authority, while the persons in office at the Centre feel insecure by the claims and clamour of the States. In other words, the concept of federalism has come under public scrutiny. Meanwhile, through neglect and short-sighted opportunist politics, the loyalty of certain local areas has been sapped, and out of despair and in some cases by design, the call of secession from the Indian Union is being raised leading to bloody and fearsome violence, marked by the retaliatory violence of the armed forces—creating certainly an extremely precarious situation.

The record of the four decades of our Republic is badly tainted by the persistence of caste divisions. In many cases, these appear to have been intensified since independence. Witness the epidemic of brutal caste violence from our villages.

The communal tension and outbreak of pogroms against the minority communities have posed a direct challenge to our national integrity. Now in the name of uniting the country, the assertion of the hegemony of the majority community is being propagated. The plan to unfurl the national tricolour in Srinagar's Lal Chowk does not help to unify the nation. Rather, it may endanger that unity itself. Discontent in Kashmir has to be calmly settled—not by the mere demonstration of flag hoisting. A flag does not make a nation, it is the nation that begets its flag.

Worst of all, the disparity between the affluent and the underprivileged has widened sharply and the latest bout of economic reforms promises to intensify, and not narrow, this immoral gap of disparity. This way the nation's morale is getting petrified while its integrity fragmented.

This is the hour of challenge for all concerned citizens of our Republic. It is their solemn task to come forward and save the Republic—its integrity, its honour and its morale. There is no moment to lose.

January 21 *N.C.*

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This Republic Day Special being one and a half times larger than the size of an ordinary number, there will be no issue of *Mainstream* on February 1, 1992. The next issue will appear on February 8, 1992.

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Appeal for Preservation of Our Economic Sovereignty

Every sensitive Indian concerned about the country's economic sovereignty feels unhappy that the nation's crisis almost on every front is deepening. Foremost is the economic crisis and we, the signatories to this statement, make a united appeal to the President, as the Head of the Republic, and to the Prime Minister and his colleagues, as the plenary representatives of the Union Government, to uphold the independence of India, the socio-economic values of the Constitution, the imperatives of self-reliance, industrial progress and prosperous agriculture. Towards this end, we plead with the government not to bend before external pressure.

We are aware that our balance of payments position, whatever the pathological causes, is precarious. But true to the Gandhian tradition and the Nehruvian vision, we must as a nation mobilise the people to resist inroads into our sovereignty even if it involves austerity, jettisoning modern luxuries, foreign goods and sophisticated technology catering to affluent amenities and exotic pleasures. Maybe, we may have to ban certain types of imports altogether for a period. Maybe, we may have to manage with cruder plants and machinery, equipments and manufactures, made in India so as to become self-reliant. Maybe, we may have to import less of oil and maximise the use of gas and coal. Maybe, energy alternatives may have to be developed all over the country to be independent of foreign imports.

Our law of patents, carefully drawn and modelled on the best principles of national interest and international standards, is an expression of parliamentary wisdom. Tampering with the laws of patents to appease American interests may be fatal to our agriculture and industry. Therefore, we stand for the 'untouchability' of our law of patents, since it protects our economy and our development and is consistent with fair norms internationally recognised. Hands off our law of patents should be our stance at the GATT negotiations (Uruguay Round).

Our friendship with the people and the Government of the United States is and has always been warm and well-meaning but the multinational corporations operate to our detriment and seek to involve the threat of Special 301 and Super 301. It is somewhat humiliating to our self-respect as a nation that we are put on the 'Priority Watch List' or rather on the 'hit-list', and what is more galling is that we are given three months' extension for compliance with what the American big business interests require of us. This is a kind of parole or probation of good conduct which a country with India's standing should object to. Indeed, the intimidatory references of the American spokesperson suggest expectations of command performance of client-conformity which, certainly, is not compatible with our sovereignty. We, therefore, emphatically request the Government of India to make our national position clear beyond mistake that everything will be done for mutual benefit in trade, commerce, industry and agriculture or trade-in-services.

It is true that our Finance Ministry has chosen to borrow from the IMF and has resorted to certain measures like devaluation whose adverse impact on the people's conditions of life is beginning to tell. Distributive justice in regard to basic needs is being subverted and any further subordination of Indian interests to Western or Japanese interests may spell harrowing conditions for the millions and eventually lead to an avalanche of unrest.

Having regard to these potential consequences, we feel that no conditionalities of the IMF or other international financing agencies should be accepted, tacitly or openly, which may in the least mortgage our economic sovereignty. The present policies of liberalisation may seem to be very attractive but in its deeper implications run counter to our legacy from Gandhiji and Panditji and to the whole history of independence, of sustainable development with justice. In these circumstances, we plead for a national debate on the issues involved, for a detailed parliamentary debate on the questions of policies and liberation from liberalisation. We are all for supporting the policies of the government so long as they are in national interest but wish to caution the government against adventurist moves and manoeuvres which serve interests other than ours at a time when the people of India are hardest hit by privations and disablements in many dimensions.

Signatories:

V.R. Krishna Iyer; E.S. Venkataramiah; Surendra J. Patel; P.N. Haksar; Rajinder Sachar; S. Madhusudan Rao; Arun Ghosh; R.C. Dutt; Nitya Nand; Vasant Sathe; K.R. Narayanan; Murli Manohar Joshi; Atal Behari Vajpayee; L.K. Advani; Yashwant Sinha; E.M.S. Namboodiripad; M. Basavapunnaiah; E.K. Nayanar; E. Balanandan; V.S. Atchutanandan; M.A. Baby; Indrajit Gupta; Chaturanan Mishra; P. Upendra; I.S. Gulati; Irfan Habib; D.N.V. Kurup; Subrata Sinha; Rajni Kothari; Khushwant Singh; Kuldip Nayyar; Nikhil Chakravartty; B.M. Udgaonkar; Swami Agnivesh; Raj Kumar Bhatia; T.N. Khoshoo; Benoy Krishna Choudhury; Ashok Mitra; P.N. Roy; M. Bhattacharya; B.R. Nag; Nirmal Kumar Chandra; Tarun Chandra Dutt; S.K. Mukherjee.

(January 12, 1992)

A Fresh Look at the Constitution

B.K. NEHRU

So large a proportion of the intellectuals who guide our thought live in Delhi and are so absorbed with the doings of the Government of India that they fail adequately to appreciate what is happening in the rest of the country. The people of India, on the other hand, are concerned not with the stratospheric matters which are the responsibility of the Central Government but with the much more earthy subjects which are the responsibility of the governments of the States. The State Governments are forever wanting more powers and more autonomy but the fact is that in every single subject which concerns the life of the people of India, responsibility rests with them and not with the Centre. The levels to which the State Governments have fallen is simply not understood by those whose eyes are riveted on Raisina Hill.

Objectives

The very first objective of any proposal for Constitutional reform must be to ensure that the system provides a stable government both at the Centre and in the States. I rate stability high in the factors required for good government; instability leads to weakness and weak government leads to chaos. We have been fortunate that since independence we have had only two periods of instability at the Centre—1977 to 1979 and 1989 to 1991. This relative stability is not a product of our constitutional system; it is the product of history on the one hand and accident on the other. The long continued struggle for independence with the Congress as its leader gave it a loyalty throughout the country which took some time to wear off. The accident was that we had two powerful personalities almost succeeding each other in the office of the Prime Minister so that it was the personality rather than the institution which caused the stability.

The author, a distinguished civil servant, served with distinction as India's Ambassador to the USA and the Governor of Jammu and Kashmir. This article is based on the S. Ranganathan Memorial Lecture that he delivered at a function, organised by the S. Ranganathan Charitable Foundation, in New Delhi on January 12, 1992.

The States have not been so forutnate. The historical role of the Congress was forgotten earlier there than at the Centre. As the towering personalities of the pre-independence period who ruled the States disappeared one by one and were replaced by ordinary politicians, the instability inherent in the system became apparent. Ever since the elections of 1967, there has been more or less instability in the governments of most of the States of India. Even when a party has come to power with a substantial majority, there is no assurance of stability. For not only is it the constant effort of the Opposition to topple the government but an opposition to the Chief Minister develops within the party by those who feel they have not had their fair share of the loaves and fishes of office. The day after a Chief Minister is sworn in there develops a group of dissidents who, if the party in power is an all-India party, are running constantly to Delhi to complain to the High Command about his misdeeds and asking for his removal. The result is that most of the time of the Chief Minister, which should be devoted to the good governance of his State, is taken away in fighting off the intrigues of his opponents. There is a story that Jawaharlal Nehru once upbraided a Chief Minister for not doing enough for the benefit of his people. The Chief Minister's reply was revealing. He said: "Panditji, both my hands are fully occupied in holding on to my chair; with which hand can I work?"

It is hardly necessary to point out the dangers of instability particularly at the Centre. No concerted policy can be followed nor can any policy be implemented, for the entire effort of the government is devoted to keeping itself in the seats of power. The situation that we are faced with in Kashmir, Punjab and Assam is in no small measure due to a lack of policy and a lack of persistence in pursuing any policy to deal with the discontents that were manifesting themselves. The economic mess in which we now are, which has made us dependent on outside authority and unable to resist its demands, is once again due to the total absence of the will to take hard and unpopular decisions. A strong government taking action two years ago to correct a situation that anybody could see was fast developing, would have prevented our country from having the kind of economic setback we are now facing and the political setback that our total dependence on the foreigner has caused.

My second objective is to improve the quality of the men and women who govern us. It is sometimes said that there is nothing wrong with the Constitution; what is wrong is only with the people who exercise power. The trouble is that the Constitution is such that it must almost inevitably and increasingly catapult into the seats of power the more undesirable elements in our society. The proportion of criminals and history-sheeters in the legislative assemblies of the country has been increasing from election to election. There have been instances in which criminal charges have actually been pending against the Chief or other Ministers in office. There is no shortage of decent, honourable, honest, public-spirited and highly competent people in the country; but the constitutional system is such that it makes it almost impossible for them to enter political life. I should like at this point to pay my tribute to that group of people who have all these qualities and have, nevertheless, had the courage to overcome the hurdles in their way. Without them our political life would have deteriorated even faster than it has. And from the many criticial remarks I shall make about politicans as a class, this category must be rigidly excluded.

The third objective is to ensure that the executive government is strong enough and willing and capable enough to address itself to solving the major problems of this country even though the measures required for their solution may, for the time being, be unpopular. The basic problem in India, of which almost all the troubles that manifest themselves from day-to-day are the facets, is the growth of our population. Even when we became independent, the population-resource ratio was less favourable in India than in many countries of the world. The population since then has more than doubled; by the end of the century it will have tripled. The population-resource ratio is, therefore, very much worse and is worsening every day.

True it is that as a result of better technology, we have been able to increase production from our limited resources slightly faster than the rate at which the population has grown. Prosperity has, therefore, increased and poverty decreased. But the rate of economic growth has been much lower than the rate of the growth of expectations. If the former has to be increased to approach the latter, the measures required, both in regard to population and in the economic field, will, in their immediate consequences, be highly unpopular. The present system makes it impossible to take any unpopular decision, for the vote has become our God. In fact, political decisions are taken which are quite clearly contrary to the national interest because the ruling party of the moment thinks that by taking them it will be returned to power at the next election or even help in getting it more votes at the next by-election.

The fourth objective is to re-establish the Rule of Law. There is no shortage of laws in this country. Every session of Parliament adds a dozen or more to them. The British Government in India passed no more than a little over 400 laws in the 90 years of their rule between 1857 and 1947. The independent Government of India has passed in the 44 years since independence almost 5000 acts at the Centre alone; it is only a minority of them that is actually implemented. Every single one of the British laws was implemented; one of the major considerations in enacting a piece of legislation was whether it was possible, given the limitations of the administrative apparatus, to enforce it. If a proposal for legislation was such that it would be impossible to enforce it, it was considered preferable not to have it, no matter how desirable, than to bring the whole system of law into disrepute by laws being violated with impunity.

Laws today are passed without adequate thought and almost without any discussion. The Prime Minister or the Chief Minister of the day gets a brainwave one day that a certain law is desirable. It is drafted the next day, is passed by the State Assembly or by both Houses of Parliament on the third day, and sent up to the head of state for assent. Furthermore, when legislative business is before the House, there is hardly ever any quorum; legislators who are supposed to have been elected to legislate have no interest in legislation.

The reason why they have no such interest is that they know very well that the law does not matter. Increasingly, the will of the Chief Minister, of the individual Minister and of the local MLA is being substituted for the laws of the land. The Civil Services, whose duty it is to implement the law and not the will or the whim of Ministers or legislators, have been subjected to such enormous pressures that they have no alternative but to forget the law and carry out these wishes.

The fifth objective is to ensure that the elected representatives of the people who make the laws actually represent the people. The MLA or MP should represent every section and every interest of the electorate; under our present system of first-past-the-post elections, the legislature does not reflect the real wishes of the people. The Congress party, which has been governing us for most of our independent existence, has not, except on two occasions, had the support of more than half the electors. The number of votes in the country opposed to the policies of the Congress has, for most of these 44 years, been larger than the number of people who support those policies. But under our system, the views of these people are not represented in Parliament as adequately as they should be. The consequence is that instead of disputes and differences being settled through debate and compromise in Parliament, which is the democratic method, they are taken into the streets with increasingly more violence.

The sixth objective is to ensure that local problems are settled and local development takes place, not in accordance with the wishes of the State legislature or even Parliament itself, but according to the wishes of the people of the locality, insofar naturally as their wishes, desires and actions do not come into conflict with the interests of the people of other localities. The system today is—of power concentrated in the hands of the State Assembly or in Parliament. The local bodies, the municipalities, the zila parishads, the village panchayats, etc. exist almost at the will of the State Government. They do not have enough resources to meet their obligations and, what is very much worse, if they take actions which the party in power at the State level does not like, the local body is suspended or superseded. This is true not only of territorial bodies such as those I have mentioned, but the craze for power is such, and the safeguards against that power being misused so few, that nominally autonomous bodies such as universities, cooperative societies and the like are infiltrated and dominated, much to their detriment, by appointees of political parties.

Finally, the objective is to reduce the ever-rising tide of corruption which threatens not only to overwhelm the administration, which is serious enough, but what is even more serious, to destroy the moral fibre of the country. Eleven years ago I made a speech in Madras which attracted considerable attention. In that I traced the roots of corruption to the enormous sums of money required for an election under our present constitutional system. The amounts have grown since then; they were then, and are now, so large that there is no possible honest method by which that kind of money can be raised. Political parties and individual legislators are compelled to raise that money; the only way they can reimburse themselves or their financiers is to extract that money, with usurious interests, from the administrative system. Corruption is, therefore, not only encouraged but the honest officer is virtually compelled both by peer pressure and by the pressure of the bosses to become as corrupt as they are.

My proposals for constitutional reform are based on the essentiality of the separation of powers. It has now for several hundred years been a well-recognised principle of democracy that the three powers of the state, the Executive, the Legislative and the Judicial, should be kept entirely separate from each other. This separation is necessary because each of the three branches of government serves as a check on the others leading to a balance in the final direction in which the government moves. In the parliamentary system there is a confusion between the Legislative and Executive powers. The Chief Minister or the Prime Minister must be a legislator, and so must all the Ministers in his Council of Ministers. In all parliamentary systems, the extent of the confusion is limited to the Ministers being members of the legislature and so is it theoretically in our Constitution. Article 102 of the Constitution in regard to the Centre and Article 191 in regard to the States says that "a person shall be disqualified for being chosen as, and for being, a member of" either the Central or the State legislatures, "if he holds any office of profit under the Government of India or the Government of any State". Unfortunately, the same sentence goes on to say "other than an office declared by" the legislature concerned "by law not to disqualify its holders". Both the Central legislature as well as every single State legislature has an enormous list of offices, every single one of which is "under the Government" and is not only of legal profit but often of great illegal profit, to the holder, as being an office which does not disqualify him from the membership of the legislature. In the case of the Mother of Parliaments, whose rules and conventions we think we follow, it took the representatives of the people almost 200 yeas to get rid of what were known as the "King's Men", whose loyalty had been bought by the Crown by giving them all kinds of offices.

MESSAGE OF THE MARCH PAST

Men, women and children.
Senior citizens and
Sentinels of Freedom.
As they march in proud
unison on the Republic Day
they have but
one thought— INDIA,
OUR INDIA.

And in the hearts of the millions who watch the parade there is only one swelling spirit — the spirit of togetherness.
A spirit that gets strengthened by challenges— economic or otherwise.

And makes us more determined in our efforts to fight poverty and forge ahead in new directions.

A Resolve to Win Challenges
That's the Parade Spirit

D A V P 91/600

Executive

We have at one stroke destroyed that essential safeguard of democracy. Once a Chief Minister is appointed, all that he has to do to keep himself in office is to give an office of profit to every single member of his party. Whence it is, that the number of Ministers goes on forever shamelessly increasing. The result is that subjects which should be, and were, dealt with by Under Secretaries, now have a full Minister to take the same decisions as the Under Secretary used to take. When this subdivision of subjects goes so far as to pass the point of absurdity in that further sub-division is impossible, those left out of the ministerial list are made Chairmen of Public Sector Corporations or Commissions. If there are not enough corporations in existence to satisfy officeless legislators, more corporations are created overnight. In fact it is becoming increasingly clear that our great devotion to socialism is based not on any understanding of, or commitment to, socialism, which we never had, but on the fact that under our system it produces enormous profits for legislators no matter what losses it produces for the tax-payer. If unfortunately even this shameless creation of offices is not enough, the legislators still left out are kept happy with being given government contracts. The life of the Chief Minister is thus ensured for the statutory term of the legislature.

The price of stability in our system seems to be the transformation of a democracy into a kleptocracy. The only danger that remains is that important legislators may be dissatisfied because they have not been rewarded with a 'lucrative' enough portfolio. The term 'lucrative portfolio' now current in our political parlance is our contribution to the theory of democracy! Here fortunately the Anti-Defection Law stands in the way but careful Chief Ministers take out an even better insurance policy. They grant to every single member of the legislature, irrespective of party, the right to transfer a given number of officials from place to place within his constituency. What happens to law and order, to education, to development, and to the numerous other services that government is supposed to provide to the people is nobody's concern. Furthermore, ruling party legislators are permitted, encouraged and indeed expected, to issue orders to the district administration. If they are disobeyed, the official is subject to the dire wrath of the Minister. The confusion between the legislative and executive powers is complete; the causalities are the Rule of Law and good administration.

My first proposal is, therefore, to separate entirely the legislative from the executive function by making it impossible for any member of the legislature to hold any office of profit under the government, including a Ministership. The Chief Executive of the country or the state that is, the President or the Governor as I would prefer to call them, will be elected separately and will appoint such Ministers as he may wish from outside the legislature. There will be no authority under the Constitution to give anybody the right to waive this prohibition.

The effect of this will be immediately and automatically to reduce drastically the attraction of becoming a legislator. The scores of thousands of people who seek tickets from the party they believe most likely to win, do so not because they are interested in legislating but because they are interested in governing. If a member of the legislature cannot exercise any executive power, the only people who will stand for election to a legislature whose only function it is to legislate, will be those who are interested in making good laws. This will automatically raise the quality of the persons wanting to be Members of Parliament or of the local Assemblies and improve the quality of legislation by having greater attention paid to it by men and women interested in legislation and having the competence to legislate. It will secondly, and very importantly, improve the quality of the Ministers because the Chief Executive will be able to recruit the best men for the job irrespective of whether or not he has the capacity to wheedle votes out of an ill-informed electorate.

My second proposal is that the President or the Governor will hold office for a fixed term of years without any possibility of his removal during that term—except by impeachment for acts of moral delinquency. Not being dependent from day-to-day for his own existence on a whole horde of rapacious legislators he will be able to propose unpopular policies and take unpopular actions in the interest of the country. He should have a tenure long enough to be able to give effect to the policies which he considers desirable, say seven years in the case of the President and five years in the case of the Governor, but, very importantly, he should be limited to a single term of office. This limitation is essential because otherwise he will fall a prey to the same temptation as our present politicians, of seeking popularity in order to remain perennially in office and in following more and more populist policies which give immediate pleasure to the voter but harm the long-term interests of the country.

The fixed term of the Chief Executive ensures stability in the executive government. The President or the Governor does not have to waste any time at all in placating the desires for power and pelf of the members of the legislature. They can be discontented with him, they can abuse him, they can run to the High Command complaining against him, but all this will have no effect. He will continue to remain in power till the earth has completed the prescribed number of orbits round the sun. The futility of these efforts will soon become apparent and the enormous amount of time and energy wasted in the effort will hopefully be put to better use.

Theoretically, the best way to elect the President or the Governor would be to have him directly elected by all the adult population of the country or the State. But our country is so vast and the population so great that the expenditure involved for any candidate would become colossal. Once again this would lead exactly to that corruption which it is one of our objectives to eliminate.

The next best alternative is for the President or the Governor to be elected by a college of electors who themselves represent the people. It is the general belief that the President of the United States is elected by the direct vote of the people. But this belief is legally and constitutionally wrong. The people vote to elect members of the College of Electors; it is this College which elects the President. The Founding Fathers of the American Constitution prescribed this indirect method because they felt, rightly, that so important a decision should not be taken by the vast number of people who could be swayed by emotion or a populist appeal or election gimmickry; it should be taken by a very small group of people who, while being representative of their communities, were relatively immune to these unworthy influences and could act in the best interest of the nation. Theoretically, members of the College of Electors were not bound by the wishes of the people who elect them to that college. They could theoretically totally disregard those wishes and vote for the person who they thought would be best for the country irrespective of who their electors wanted. The conventions that have, however, developed and have probably by now assumed a legal form debar such a practice.

There is nothing new about the proposal that the Chief Executive should be elected by a College of Electors for the President today is also so elected, the College of Electors being the Members of Parliament and the State legislatures. And indeed the Prime Minister and the Chief Ministers are once again elected by a narrow and small College of Electors, that is to say, the members of the majority party in the Lok Sabha or the lower house of the State legislatures. The College of Electors I propose is much wider consisting of not only the Members of Parliament and the Members of the State legislatures but also of the members of all local bodies down perhaps to the panchayat level. The electorate will be wide enough to ensure that it reflects the wishes of the people; it will be small enough not to require much expenditure of money to enable it to get to know the qualities and the merits and the policies of the various candidates for the office. This was the method that was adopted in the Constitution of the Fifth Republic of France originally. It is only later that France changed to a two-stage direct election. But France is smaller than our larger States and France is infintely richer than India. It is, therefore, easier for them to expand the constituency of the President than it would be for us.

There is one specific provision regarding the election of the President which should find a place in the Indian Constitution. India has a peculiar problem, shared by Pakistan and Nigeria as also, in another way, by Canada. It is that there is one region of the country with a distinct linguistic and cultural identity which is so large as to dominate the rest of the country. In Canada, the English-speaking part dominates Quebec; in Pakistan, the Punjab has more population and more wealth than the rest of the country put together. In Nigeria, the area which used to be the Northern Province is larger than all the other provinces combined. In India, it is the Hindi-speaking belt, undoubtedly more backward than the rest of the country but more populous, which has since independence tended to dominate the governance of the country particularly in the matter of the choice of the Prime Minister. In 44 years, we have had only two Prime Ministers who have not belonged to Uttar Pradesh. Given the fact that some of these seven occupants of the Prime Ministerial office would have occupied it in any case because of their outstanding merit no matter which part of the country they came from, it is nevertheless true that this large mass of northern India enjoys an unfair advantage over the rest of the country.

The dissatification that arises from this kind of imbalance without adequate safeguards in the Constitution to protect the rights of the other States are clearly visible in Canada and Pakistan. The only country which has recognised the problem in its Constitution is Nigeria and I would suggest that we take a cue from what that country has done. In our conditions, I would notionally divide the country into four zones—east, west, south and north—and would require a successful candidate for the Presidency not only to get an overall majority of the votes cast throughout the country but also a specified, relatively small, percentage of votes in all the zones, before he can be declared elected. This is to ensure that we do not get a President whose knowledge of the rest of the India is so confined as to think of everyone coming from the south of the Vindhyas as a Madrasi!

Legislature

The proposals I wish to make about the powers of the legislatures and the methods of their election are so interlinked with the question of the devolution of power that it would be preferable if I discuss that first before proposing the mechanism of election.

The States in general are forever wanting more autonomy. The discontents in Punjab, Assam and to some extent even in Kashmir are traceable to a certain extent to the lack of autonomy. This question has been gone into very thoroughly by Justice Sarkaria and his Commission. I would agree with his findings that, bearing in mind the interests of the country as a whole, the powers and responsibilities that have been allocated to the Centre and the States under our Constitution do not require any radical change. There may be some adjustments here and there which may be of benefit but these are marginal.'

What has harmed and indeed, to a certain extent, destroyed the autonomy of the States are three factors. The moment the country, with general consent, adopted central planning for economic development, it followed that certain powers which the Constitution gave to the States would have to be vested in the Centre. To take but one example, industry under the Constitution is a State subject. But economic planning for India as a whole cannot be done without central control of industrial policy; control over industry was, therefore, transferred to the Centre by the willing consent of the States.

But the most important factor in the destruction of the autonomy of the States has been the extra-constitutional authority that is exercised by the all-India political parties. Under the Constitution, it is for the people of the State freely to choose and elect their own candidates to the legislature and for the members of the legislature to choose the person they like best as their Chief Minister. The Chief Minister then chooses his Ministers and the head of the State, who is above all political conflict, swears them in. There is no room in the Constitution for any outside interference. However, the existence of all-India parties has resulted in the destruction of this freedom of advice. The Congress gets the principal blame for this for the simple reason that it has been in power for the longest period of time. But the guilt is as much that of all other all-India political parties; the Janata Dal or the BJP act exactly in the same manner. The interference goes to such an extent that even the list of party candidates to the local legislature has to be approved by the central organisation, the Chief Minister to be elected has to be its nominee, the Ministers he chooses and even the portfolios that he gives them are dictated to him by the same authority. One of the great appeals of regional parties is that there is no such interference with them from outside; regional parties in power consequently enjoy much greater freedom than governments belonging to all-India parties. No constitutional provision can be devised to prevent this kind of unconstitutional interference based as it is on the free will of the people; the remedy for restoring the autonomy that the Constitution guarantees to the States lies in their own hands.

The third factor that has operated to weaken the autonomy of the States is the misuse of the institution of the Governor. It was the clear intention of the Founding Fathers that that office should be totally above the political fray and that its occupants would in no way be interested in furthering any political party. In order to ensure that the Governor would not be subjected to the pressure of the Central Government he was given a fixed term of office of five years. The oath of office of the Governor is clear. It says that he will, to the best of his ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution and the law and that he will devote himself to the service and well-being of the people of the State.

This would involve, as the Sarkaria Commission has pointed out, the appointment of individuals as Governors who have achieved eminence in fields of activity other than politics or who, though they may have started as politicians, have no further political ambitions or role. However, over the years this concept of an independent and impartial Governor has increasingly become unacceptable to the Central Government. The day after the Sarkaria Commission report was made public, seven appointments of Governors were made of whom six were active politicans belonging to the party in power at the Centre. The concept seems increasingly to be that the Governor is no more than a representative of the Government of India subject to its orders whose function is to serve the interests of the party ruling at the Centre. This concept has been accepted to such a point that the Cabinet of India advised the President to dismiss all the Governors who were in office when they themselves came to power and the President accepted this advice. There could have been no clearer demonstration of the changed character of the Governorship; the Governor had become a political hack not to hold office for the five years which the Constitution required but only till the government at the Centre changed its colour.

My proposal has the inestimable advantage of abolishing the institution of the Governor as it at present exists thereby removing all threats presented by that office to the autonomy of the State. The new Governor freely elected by the people of the State can cock a snook at the Central Government and tell them to mind their own business. Whether or not he obeys the orders of an all-India political party will depend on him and the wishes of his electors. If, in addition, central planning is abandoned as it is likely gradually to be, the autonomy of the States will be restored to its original position.

But the devolution of power that I seek is not from the Centre to the States but from the States to its local bodies, that is, the municipalities, the town area committees, the district boards, the village panchayats and the like, which are much closer to the people than the MLAs sitting in the State capitals. All these bodies now exist but none of them has constitutional protection. What I would want is that their rights, their obligations, their powers, their resources, their method of election and organisation should all be given constitutional protection without the right of any authority, whether the State Government or the Centre, to supersede or suspend them. If the State Government or any other authority had any objection to any of their actions, it would be for the courts to decided whether the action was intra or ultra vires.

I would hold direct elections only to the primary legislative body, that is, the village panchayats in the rural areas or the town area committees or municipal committees in the urban areas. These elections should be held with proportional representation on the basis of a single transferable vote in multi-member constituencies so that every caste, creed, trade or calling or other interest would have a fair and equal chance of representation. A village is a small body of people who inevitably know each other intimately. They know who is good and who is bad; they know who is competent and who is incompetent; they know who works for the public good and who is a self-seeker. They can be trusted to elect to ther panchayats the best people in the village.

It is often said that giving additional powers to a village panchayat would only mean giving powers to the local strongarm *Chaudhri*. This may be true in present conditions. But if the panchayat is given constitutional recognition and its elections conducted under the same safeguards as those to Parliament, I do not see why the panchayat cannot be as true a reflection of the will of the people as it is humanly possible for any elected body to be.

The primary body, that is, the village panchayat or the town area of the municipal committee would be in my scheme of things the base on which further representative bodies would be built. The next tier of local self-government would be the district board—unless local conditions require yet another intermediate body. This would be elected not directly but by a college of electors. This college could consist of the members of all the primary local bodies in the district. For the next stage of government, namely, the State legislature, there again should be no direct elections, the college of electors being members of the district boards of the States. The final stage would be the election to the Central Parliament for which the college of electors should be the members of the State legislatures.

All these elections should be through proportional representation on the basis of the single transferable vote. The system of the single transferable vote has been in practice in our country since the beginning of our Constitution for elections to the members of the Rajya Sabha. It is by no means unknown to us and should easily be practicable even at the lower levels of elections. It is by far the fairest way of electing a body or an individual which or who reflects in themselves or himself the totality of the interests of the electors. The first-past-the-post system as I have earlier pointed out completely distorts the will of the people and is, to that extent, undemocratic. This system is prevalent only in the United Kingdom and in the countries which at one time were part of the British Empire. In all other democracies, some form of proportional representation is practised. For some reason, the only other form of proportional representation known in India is the German system of list voting. In that system for half the seats in the legislature the people vote not for individuals but for political parties. The number of seats of a political party depends on the proportion of votes it gets. Which individual actually gets elected depends on the position his name occupies in the party list. This is a method that takes away the power of election from the individual voter and transfers it to the party bosses. In Indian conditions where the party bosses in general have no elective authority, this system would be absolutely disastrous.

The merits of the proposals I make are first that the electorate at every stage is limited to electing the people who are to decide on the issues which are of the most direct consequence to them. The normal villager in an Indian village has neither any concern with nor any knowledge of abstruse subjects such as foreign policy on which, under the present system, he is supposed to vote. He is concerned as a villager with the supply of drinking water or proper working of the school or the establishment of a hostpital or a dispensary, the timely supply of seeds and fertilisers and irrigation water. He could not care less about whether India followed a policy of alignment or non-alignment.

Further, he knows personally the people who want his vote; whether they stand on the symbol of one party or another is irrelevant to him. He will choose the man who in his opinion is the best man and in whom he has the greatest faith.

Similarly at the next tier of government, the likelihood is that the voter would have sophistication enough, knowledge enough and interest enough to be concerned with the affairs which are the responsibility of the next tier which are wider than the village or the town area. He would in addition be more personally knowledgeable about the individuals who are wanting his vote than would be the general elector. As this process proceeds, the expectation is reasonable that the level of sophistication, knowledge, and interest will increase. What happens at the moment is quite the reverse. A blitzkrieg overtakes a village or a town at enormous expense asking the voter to vote for the Hand or the Lotus or whatever. All that he may know is the name of the leader of the party and the vote that he gives represents his confidence in that leader rather than in the individual for whom he is voting.

The Services

Lastly, but very definitely not the least importantly, I deal with the services whose position I feel should be specifically and clearly defined in the Constitution. Whereas in the classical theory of the separation of powers, the Executive is regarded as one undifferentiated whole, modern political theory tends increasingly to divide the executive power also into two separate branches. There is the political exeuctive whose function it is to direct policy and in the classical words of Harold Laski, "to inject a current of tendency into the stream of affairs". These policies, in order to be effective, have to be given shape into laws which have to be approved by the second branch of government, namely, the Legislative. The application of the law in particular cases is not, however, the function of the political executive; it is the function of the permanent civil service. This group of people are entrusted with the implementation of the law. The Income Tax Act, the contents of which are a matter of policy, does not vest in the Minister of Finance any powers at all; the persons in whom various powers are vested are the Income Tax Officer, the Commissioner of Income Tax, etc. etc. Similarly, no Minister has any function at all under the Criminal Procedure Code; the people who are entrusted with functions under that Code are the District Magistrates, the Superintendents of Police and the like. There is no law, whether in India or in any other democracy which empowers a Minister to decide an individual case; Ministers are merely advisers to the President or the Governor; those whose duty it is to carry out the orders which the Ministers have advised the President to give are the servants of the President which the Ministers are not.

The reason why India is increasingly becoming a lawless country is that those to whom the law entrusts its enforcement are not allowed to exercise their powers. The law is replaced by the will of the Ministers and, indeed, often by the will of individual MLAs. The law says that the police must take cognisance of a murder, investigate it, and proceed to prosecute the party or parties whcih it considers guilty. The Minister, on the other hand, says that if the murder has been committed by his henchmen, the case has either not to be registered at all or not investigated or investigated improperly or the post mortem report has to be cooked or other steps taken to ensure that the guilty party gets away scot-free. Not only that but there have been well-known instances where the Chief Minister has used the police force as his own private army virtually converting it into a gang of outlaws committing murder and rapine. To collect money for his own private purse through the agency of the police force is something that unfortunately is by no means now unknown in our country.

We have gotten to a point at which many parts of the country—and I do not refer to Assam, Punjab or Kashmir which are special cases—have no law and order. The only persons whose life and property can be regarded as safe are those who are the political bosses connected with the party in power at the moment or those who are fortunate enought to enjoy their favours.

How is it then that the permanent civil services have abdicated the functions entrusted to them by law? The Constitution has provisions which show clearly that the permanent services were supposed to be independent of the political executive and not to be swayed by the political bias of whoever happened to occupy the seats of power for the time being. The Public Service Commissions which were supposed to be completely impartial and independent were to recruit the personnel of the services; under Article 311 of the Constitution the public servants once recruited were given special protection; they could not be dismissed or demoted or other disciplinary action taken against them without an elaborate inquiry.

But the provisions of the Constitution did not specifically prevent the Minister from transferrring, denying promotion or suspending an officer who was not pliable and performed his duties without fear or favour as he was expected to do. It is these three powers of transfer, denial of promotion and suspension that have been ruthlessly used completely to demoralise the services. In a country where jobs are not easily available, it is not surprising, though it is tragic, that a larger number of civil servants, including the corps d'elite of the all-India services, namely, the IAS and the IPS, should not have been able to live up to the great traditions of independence and impartiality which they inherited.

In virtually all well-run democracies, the civil services have, mostly by convention, a special position which excludes the kind of pressure that is applied against them in India. In the United Kingdom—and this is true *mutatis mutandis* of all European democracries—recruitment is made by the Public Service Commissions which are truly independent and immune from political influences. Appointments, postings, transfers, promotions or denials thereof, are all decided not by Ministers but by a group of senior civil servants themselves. As the civil servant's future does not depend on whether or not he has been able to please his political master but whether or not he has been successful in implementing the law, it is the law and not the ministerial whim which get obeyed.

The idea that the civil services should have autonomy is, of course, anathema to politicians of all kinds and of all parties. The Indian tradition of governance is not through the Rule of Law; the law in our tradition is what the ruler wishes. It is not understood that in a proper democracy there is no ruler in the sense we have understood the term but that every functionary of government from the highest to the lowest has a strictly limited task to perform. That task is defined by the Constitution and the laws; the will of any indiviudal, no matter how highly placed, cannot prevail against the law. Even if it is the President who breaks the law, he is liable to impeachment. We are all aware that Richard Nixon who had authorised a kind of house-breaking and larceny had to abdicate what is perhaps the most powerful office in the world, the Presidency of the United States, as he found himself defenceless against the threat of impeachement. In India even a minor Minister can authorise and does authorise that kind of action without the slightest fear that any authority would take any action against him. Indeed, extortion, bribery, unlawful detention, assault and even murder seem in our political consciousness to be the legitimate rights of the person who regards himself and is often regard as the ruler.

I suggest that if we do not want to descend into chaos, a major change in our Constitution will have to be to define the respective and distinct functions of the permanent and political parts of the Executive branch of government. The conventions on which we were relying for good government under the Constitution have all been broken; they have, therefore, to be replaced by law.

Conclusion

I have attempted to sketch the outlines of a Constitution which, in my view, should replace the present one if we are again to become a peaceful, honest, just and progressive nation. Each one of the specific proposals I have made requires to be greatly elaborated after mature thought and wide discussion. I do not for a moment claim a monopoly of wisdom; what I would like to suggest is that these ideas of mine should be discussed for what they are worth more objectively than has hitherto been the case.

The objection that is often raised even to the discussion of this kind of basic constitutional reform is that it is so radical that it is never likely to be accepted by the only people who can change the Constitution, namely, the politicians themselves, whose present access to power and pelf it will totally eliminate. That is true in normal circumstances. But the body politic is deteriorating at so rapid a pace that it is just possible that within a foreseeable future an abnormal set of circumstances will arise where the present-day politician will not have the last word in determining the future of our country. Who would have thought only a couple of years ago that the Soviet Union would collapse and be replaced by something so entirely different? The conventional wisdom was that the power of the rulers of the Union was so formidably entrenched that nobody could ever challenge it. But circumstances are not bodies; it was the force of circumstance, the economic collapse of the system which forced the change.

All that I urge is that at least the intelligentsia should discuss these matters and come to some kind of consensus on the shape that we would like the constitutional reforms to take so that when the irresistible force of circumstance compels the change, we should not face the kind of chaos that has replaced the breakdown of the old system in the Soviet Union. ■

University in a Democracy

UPENDRA BAXI

We all know that our campuses are beset with a kind of malignancy arising from a multitude of big and small factors. It seems that all of us—students, teachers, karamcharis—more often than not tread on the toes of each other. Verbal aggression, name-calling and even shouting downright abuse is the order of the day. Even worst forms of physical aggression abound. Stabbing incidents are common in many of our campuses. And ragging which seems to be some people's idea of fun creates situations which often result in student fatality; in any case, severe psychic distress, especially in terms of self-image and self-esteem, haunts the victim for a long time. Sexual harrassment of women on campuses is also increasing alarmingly.

Campus cultures also reflect pronounced tendencies towards denigration of others, often quite malicious. Perhaps, this syndrome may be described as *nishkam ninda* (desireless denigration), the opposite of *nishkam karma* (action unaccompanied by desire of gain) the *Gita* proselytised.

It is not that we are not aware of the crisis of civility in our campus cultures. Indeed, we talk about it from time to time. And we insist on the norms of civility, even if in politically partisan ways, from time to time. But, by and large, apathy overtakes honest agony at the growing crisis of civility. Private distress is not matched by public outrage.

Our campuses are marked by moral majorities which, however, prefer to remain silent. But a silent moral majority is not a change agent. Indeed, its inarticulateness endangers the very idea of a University, an idea which is civilisationally precious. And a society which progressively loses the idea of University is indeed a society without a future, if future is to be conceived as the shape of a struggle for just transformation by men and women of compassion, dignity and learning.

I have said that moral majorities on Indian campuses were inarticulate. This must be qualified by two caveats. They are not, quite naturally, inarticulate in pursuit of individual or class/collective interest. The rationality of self-interest is powerful enough for all of us to break our *mauna* (vow of silence) when the occasion demands this. But, more important, even the moral majority is a participant in *nishkam ninda*. The leaders of moral majority—be they teachers, students, karamcharis—are extremely articulate on one theme: lamentation on 'politicisation' of our campuses, on 'lumpenisation' and 'criminalisation' of politics and on the decline of values, summed up as a loss of national character.

The author is the Vice-Chancellor of Delhi University. This contribution is taken from the convocation address he delivered at the University of Manipur (January 4, 1992).

All of us are very generous with denigration of politics and politicians, as individuals and as a class. And I know, as we all do, that there is a lot that is wrong in the practices of Indian politics. But the continuous condemnation of practices of politics is, I believe, unjustified as well as harmful to the future of democracy in India. We must strive to correct and chasten arrogance of power. But to denounce politics and politicians as a class is, simply, anti-democratic.

For, liberal democracy requires dedication to politics; doing of politics requires men and women to shun other career paths; without some people opting for politics as a career, consuming them in the process, the pursuit of other careers—including academic careers—would simply be impossible. In its most ideal sense, democratic politics is sacrificial, although existentially, pursuit of politics may not be seen as sacrificial anymore.

But whatever be our judgment on the nature or career in politics this much ought to be clear: liberal democracy requires men and women who would pursue power for its own sake and seek to justify this pursuit in cogent languages of national interest. Without a will to power and a rhetoric of legitimation no successful practice of politics or career in politics is ever possible. Only in India an observation that politicians are 'power-hungry', 'power-brokers' would be regarded as gems of wisdom. It is as profound as an observation which condemns a capitalist for making profit!

I would want to think of democratic politics more seriously. If you think that politics is bad, what's the answer to bad politics? One answer enamouring many a practitioner of politics is that no politics is better than 'bad' politics; that is the royal road to authoritarianism. But there is another answer to the question of 'bad' politics. And that is: 'more politics'. By 'more politics' I mean great civic participation in the affairs of the state. Name-calling, maligning, gossiping, condemning politicans as a class is, in my opinion, not civic participation, but its precise opposite: a mean-minded evasion of responsibility of knowing and doing things for the nation.

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UNIVERSITIES are sites for expansion of consciousness, accesses to millennial traditions of thought, development of scientific outlook, and creatively compassionate engagement with national renewal. We should bring the great human heritage that we name as university to bear on our understanding of practices of politics and seek to transform its nature and direction where necessary. This cannot be done by lung power, muscle power, or trigger-happy verbal aggression. We need to bear our civilised understanding to this great task and a dignity of discourse marked by humility.

And this virtue of humility should arise from introspection within our own campuses. Have we been able to exercise freedom of choice, relatively free from the arm of politics, rigorously within our domain? Have we demonstrated the necessary qualities of moral imagination and academic exemplarship in ways which not merely sustain our heritage but enrich it for future? Are practices of academic power within the Indian campuses informed by values and virtues whose lack we constantly bemoan in others? Have we too readily succumbed to temptations whcih we would like others in public domain to valiantly resist? What is the transformative potential of practices of knowledge for practices of power? Or is there manifesting, over time, an impermissible degree of unity between the practices of knowledge and practices of power? If the latter is the case, should we not begin to understand the criticism of politics as our agony at our own selves?

These uncomfortable questions must be on our agenda. And we should all discuss them with patience, courage and candour. I believe that even a modest growth of determination to place such live questions on our collective consciousness will give hope for overcoming the crisis of civility on our campuses. Recovery of civility and of dignity of discourse on our campuses is important for the Indian future. It is important if we are to cease to be 'modern educated saints' whom Karl Marx witheringly criticised more than a century ago when he wrote: the classical saint of Christianity mortified his body for the sake of salvation of the soul of masses; in contrast, the modern educated saint mortifies the bodies of the masses for the sake of his own salvation.

If we have to choose between models of saintliness, Marx should be our unfailing guide. Indian campuses, in their search for renewal, need to move in the direction of ever greater social engagement and commitment. We should be moved, in thought and action, by everyday misery of the Indian impoverished; we should find ways, in everything we do in our campuses, to express solidarity in struggle against vicious forms of deprivation, dispossession, disadvantages to which hundreds of thousands of our fellow beings are subjected—by society and state. In addition to being progenitors of well-bred, well-manicured critiques of power, Indian campuses should themselves be producers of alternate social consciousness and of visions of justice.

It is true that "it is not given to any generation of men to complete the task of human improvement and redemption". But it is also equally true that "no generation is free, either, to desist from them". This generational commitment carries the reminder that the attainment of social justice involves a series of tasks, none of which is accomplished by recoiling at the arrogance of power. We should also recall that tasks of justice are often performed best through quiet looking acts of struggle in one's own academic niche. That niche is secured by practices of power oriented to the Indian Constitution.

Towards the end of his luminous career Albert Einstein said: "Politics is harder than physics." And education conceived as constitutional politics directed to escalate transformative potential of future generations of Indian citizens is even harder than the politics of will to power for domination and subjugation of men and women. This is the reason why academic freedom is the most difficult freedom of all. And a university constitutes a permanent invitation for us all to exercise and enjoy this freedom. ■

Mera Ukaradi Mahan

YOGINDER K. ALAGH

The word *ukaradi* literally means dungheap in Gujarati. It is also the name of a village of around 1430 souls about 28 kilometres north-west of Viramgam, the headquarters town of a taluka of the same name in Ahmedabad district. The village is a part of the area called the Chuwal Pradesh (*chuwal*) originates from the Hindi-Gujarati equivalent of 44 referring to the land of 44 villages). Viramgam, it may be recalled, had gained momentary world fame, since to go to the Kala Ghoda Salt Works of the then Imperial Government you could do so only via Viramgam. In fact the famous despatch to the United States, describing the brutal lathi charges on Maulana Azad and the Congress satyagrahis during the freedom struggle probably went from the present Viramgam Post Office, since not much has changed in this town with its ancient walled fortification, *talao* and handsome Bapus, Darbars and Thakores.

The soil of the Chuwal area is the gold our country in many parts is endowed with—the rich deltaic alluviam—not that common in many other parts of Gujarat—with their black, or red laterite soils, but the problem is water. My friend Sanat Mehta tells us of the incredulous look on his face when he went to some villages in north-western India in the 1987 drought as the AICC Drought Committee Secretary, and was told of the misery of the *sukha*, arising from the groundwater being as low as 40 feet. In Gujarat, of course outside the coastal plain, temple bells start ringing if groundwater levels reach 40 metres high. In the Chuwal folklore women sing of the blessings of the years in which it rains, for only in those years do their men come back from far away places in the Chaumasa.

I would like to remember Republic Day this year by my "Ukaradi" experience on August 15 last year. Independence Day enthusiasm this year was subdued by even the Doordarshan commentators at Red Fort talking of the sombre mood generated by the nation's woes. For some of us, however, Ukaradi was to be the silver-lining.

A few days earlier my friend Vimal Shah, the author of the Resurveys of Matar Taluka (the original Matar Survey by Sitaramayya on behalf of the AICC was a part of the freedom struggle) had met me with his friends the Gandhians, Ambubhai Shah and Maganbhai Patel. They were accompanied by a 60 year old gentleman who had the hard lean look of a Gujarati trader and yet seemed to have a benign eye on Sarvodaya workers, not to mention economists like Vimal Shah and me. Ambubhai got straight to the point. The other gentlemen was Mulchandbhai Virchandbhai Shah of Sarangpur village of Dholka taluka in the Bhal Pradesh of Ahmedabad district. He had donated a lakh of rupees to the Sarvodaya Sangh for the "balanced social and economic development of any one village" and the Bhal Nalkantha Prayogik Sangh at the Sarvodaya Ashram at Gundi, Lothal (yes, the Indus Valley Lothal) had picked up Ukaradi village, over 150 kilometres away for this purpose.

Ukaradi was sufficiently far away for Mulchandbhai not to feel as if he was helping his own *watan* and anyway wasn't it appropriate to start with *ukaradi* on independence day this year, said this *chela* of Gandhi with a slightly mischievous smile. It is quite obvious that this business of cleaning toilets in Phoenix and of Bhangi Colony will remain with us. The villagers had collected twentyfive thousand rupees and would eventually match Mulchandbhai's one lakh. Maganbhai of the Sangh had done a survey of Ukaradi and I was to start the work with a speech on Independence Day. "I will come anyway since I like development mongering, but let us get a Minister," I said; for that way we will get some more money, I explained. "Ministers only make promises these days, Alagh saheb"—this from Mulchand Kaka.

The caption should have been: "*Mera Mulchand Mahan*". They were picking up guns to settle scores all over, Nafis Sadiq was telling us that the Sahel was being ravished. My friends, Maurice Strong and Nitin Desai, were worried about CFCs,

The author, a distinguished economist and former Member of the Planning Commission, is currently Professor of Economics, Sardar Patel Institute of Economic and Social Research, Ahmedabad.

the ozone layer and the Earth Charter. Our own Anil Agarwal was telling all of them that it's all wrong, and Gorby was probably preparing for his famous holiday—but the man comes out from the Bhal, takes out a lakh of rupees and insists on "the balanced development of any one village". No wonder the Planning Commission is in trouble.

There are over a hundred Darbar households in Ukaradi and about fifteen each of Rawals, Thakores and Rabari Bharwads (cowherds). There are about fifty Kumbhars and around thirty Harijan households. With a majority population of darbar, rawal and thakore households, it is a socially conservative village. For example a number of women drew *ghunghats* (*laj kadvani* in Gujarati).

Out of its 857 hectares of land, only 32 were irrigated. There is a big *talao* and a small *talavadi*. Paddy, jeera and cotton are grown if the rains are good. There seemed little poverty in the village and less inequality than in most rural areas.

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THE entire village in all its finery was present on August 15. After a mass tree plantation ceremony in the village commons, Mulchandbhai presented his cheque and the sarpanch, Bhathisangh Solanky, a bag full of the villagers' contributions to Kashiben Mehta, President of the Sarvodaya Ashram. Kashiben who has quite a reputation for her pugnacity, everytime she got up would ask the women to get rid of the *ghunghat* ("*laj rakhwani, laj kadvani nathi*"; difficult to translate the play on words but something like we must preserve our honour, not cover it). The village schoolgirls danced on a welcome song and some grains and oil were distributed to destitute households.

The appeal by Ambubhai for volunteers to give up drinking, tobacco and gambling, was met by a stony silence. The proud Darbars would not renounce their macho pursuits and that too in front of their elders, the visiting dignitaries and most important, I suspect, their womenfolk. Also the acceptance of these indulgences as "sinful" was perhaps not OK. The ice was broken by Pratap Singh—a graduate farmer, the local development monger, honorary postman and M.C. of the show—who announced that he was giving up smoking. Sensing this as the opportune time, I also joined in a pep talk on the fun of fighting the tobacco urge and how I had given up smoking sixty cigarettes a day. The action began with a renunciation from one of the older Darbars who come up twisting his imposing moustache and spoke out his vow and as the day wore on we had around twenty more volunteers.

Pratap Singh took me to the *talao*. In the areas which are desilted, the water tables rise. The farmers then use an *oiliya* (a diesel pumpset for irrigation). HYV seeds are used and the yield is around 55 quintals per hectare of paddy. A young schoolboy who accompanied us quickly transformed the bighas and kutcha maunds to quintals and hectares. He had quite a glow when I told him that he was a great Hindustani *sipahi* when he translated fertiliser from bags of nitrogen/bigha to nutrient kilograms per hectare. Pratap Singh wanted the entire *talao* to be disilted and the embankment on the northern end repaired. The village was getting Rs 60,000 as JRY funds and I suggested they use them. They were told they could not do so for some hassle between the Minor Irrigation, Rural Development and Panchayat Departments which in spite of my Delhi training even I could not understand from the *talati*.

So much for land and water development through labour-intensive means. In the *panchayat ghar* we worked out with the rainfall pattern for the last ten years that the *talao*'s capacity should be for a little less than the average rainfall, for in that case there would be carry over storage into three of the four bad years. It was agreed that it should be possible to grow about Rs 3000 of output per bigha with around 18 inches of water and about Rs 1800 in bad years with some carry over storage. Plastic lining, mulching and other water-saving possibilities were talked about.

More *oiliyas* and first stage processing of paddy, jeera and cotton was difficult and so the price realisation was low. New technologies for processing were coming, I said. But the PACS was not eligible for refinance on account of default. Would they agree for rescheduling of debts? Yes—but the local functionaries had not heard of the Khusro Committee's revival plans or NABARD's restructuring proposals. We were going to meet again with the concerned people to resolve these problems.

The Darbars were happy when I talked of the intoxication of *vikas* as a substitute for their renunication and the ladies liked to be told that the young girls who welcomed us and others were the foundation of our future—in fact our civilisation. I remember Sudhir Krishna who was then Collector in Sidurga in Karnataka telling me how excited the Youth Club in an interior village was, when we shared similar thoughts with them and later at

Mussoorie insisted that all planners must visit villages to concretise their ideas.

But as I drove back my Gandhian friends in my van, in spite of their exuberance I was not at all sure that we should be able to integrate all the programmes for which I had written "guidelines" while at Delhi—and for which I was now supposed to be planning at Gandhinagar. This "small" job had to be done in the village of Ukaradi.

Thank you Mulchandbhai for insisting with your own money on the balanced development of a village. Also thank you Ukaradi. Prof N.R. Rao keeps on accounting our big successes. We can at least try to make a success of this one small job. Come to think of it even the IMF team may not object. For we have a lakh and a quarter of our own post-devaluation rupees tucked away in our own restructured deregulated lead bank's local branch. Delhi, somewhere between Narita and JFK, remember not to lose touch with Ukaradi. ■

Help us Mother Earth . . .

MRINALINI SARABHAI

Once upon a time the world began, from God or perhaps only with a big bang. It does not really matter which—for here we are for better or for worse, connected close together—like pearls upon a string. Reflected each in another whether we will or not, what are we doing here trying perhaps to save our planet with words of wisdom—perhaps later to act upon these visions or perhaps not?

Are there problems? Ah yes, the overpopulation. Do not let that bother you, my friends. Thousands of girl children are being slaughtered every day, in pure scientific methodology. Man will survive!

Did you say culture was being lost ? Do not despair! Farsight and Bollywood will bring their precious gifts of sex and violence right to your door.

Mythology is so foolish—just stories of these primitive peoples of the Third World, of course.

This is the text of the author's intervention at the symposium on "The Challenge of the Twentyfirst Century", organised by the Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust in New Delhi (November 19-21, 1991).

The God Shiva whose locks were forests of Himalayan peaks has had his tresses shorn, by us, of course. Such childish thoughts this worship of the Ganga, its mighty flow-we stopped with garbage. For we are human and we know best. Water is passé, let's drink you know what!

Words, words, words. I am so tired of words. You speak of conservation. Alas, I have nothing to conserve. You speak of food—to me who has nothing to eat!

You speak of a man called Gandhi. We shot him—yes, you and I, so long ago—we shot the truth, again, again, again!

Dear friends, let us *stop speaking,* and for a long while to come, *act out* those dreams we dream. Yes, we are human. But surely we can save just one tree, one child, one bird.

It's strange, but I do still have faith. So help us Mother Earth who gave us life, to share your bounty—please without greed, please without strife. ■

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Taking Secularism to the Masses

SEEMA MUSTAFA

It is difficult and at the same time simplistic to look for a watershed in the politics of communalism. But if one were to do that to understand the developments in recent years, the turning point will be the controversial Shah Bano judgement by the Supreme Court and, more specifically, the Muslim Women's Divorce Bill brought in and passed by the Rajiv Government.

For, in doing so the Congress-I Government unnecessarily got involved in a controversy not of its making, and to appease the Muslim fundamentalists who deliberately construed the Supreme Court verdict allowing maintenance rights to the divorced Muslim woman as a direct attack on the Shariat, brought in the legislation negating the court verdict. The proponents were the Imams, the mullahs and the self-styled Muslim leaders who have resisted change and progress so as to retain their hold, or whatever they perceive of it, on the Muslim community at large. Regardless of the fact that most Islamic countries have brought in reforms in the personal law, the custodians of Islam here whipped up a hysterical campaign against the verdict, demanding that the government intervene and set matters 'right'.

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THE tradgedy of Indian secularism has been that many who claim to profess this ideology misconceive it to mean a 'soft' attitude towards Muslim fundamentalists. There has been a tendency by political leaders even of the secular hue to pamper Muslim fundamentalists. Note the difference between Muslim fundamentalists and the Muslim community. For while successive governments at the Centre, and in the Hindi belt in particular, have paid scant heed to the genuine grievances of the minorities, allowing them economically and socially to sink further into their ghettos, they have tried to retain this crucial vote-bank through the Imams and the mullahs. By succumbing shamelessly to regressive suggestions designed to further suppress the minorities and at the same time, rather deliberately it does seem, doing nothing or perhaps everything (deployment of PAC, discriminatory recruitment policies, etc.) to preserve the minorities as second class citizens.

Rajiv Gandhi was no different. Only more ignorant. And in his ignorance he resorted to half-baked measures that have set the country aflame. Instead of leaving the self-styled Muslims to challenge the Supreme Court verdict through the court itself, he decided to intervene. Ignoring the secular voice that had asserted itself, he participated with the Muslim fundamentalists to drown it. And brought in this legislation which proved to be the turning point in India's recent politics. For, while it satisfied the Muslim clergy, it armed the Hindu fanatics with new ammunition against the government and the minorities. And provided them with a 'base' which they had lacked earlier.

It was then the turn of the Hindu fundamentalists to orchestrate a strident demand for 'justice'. Attacking the government for pampering Muslims, the BJP and all its front organisations began a campaign to promote their communal cause. Namely, that even though in the majority, Hindus in this country were actually second class citizens. This argument struck a chord in the Congressmen's hearts and there was considerable pressure on Rajiv Gandhi and his advisors at the time, from within. So the search began for the 'counter'. And the Babri Masjid/Ram Janmabhoomi tucked away in far-off Ayodhya provided the answer. The locks of this long-disputed shrine were opened, much to the glee of the Hindu fundamentalists and the consternation of the Muslims. The government exulted over the clever ploy of killing two birds with one stone, lacking the vision to realise that it had opened a pandora's box with the potential of destroying the social fabric of our country.

The author, a journalist-turned-politician, belongs to the Congress-S on which party's ticket she contested the Lok Sabha poll from UP last year.

The BJP fanatics realised the potential and immediately began centring their campaign around the disputed shrine. One thing led to another and the Rajiv Government showed neither the ability nor the will to check the communal environment from deteriorating. *Shilanyas* began, spreading the vitriol to villages that had never before heard of the Ayodhya controversy. So successful was the BJP's exploitation of the issue that when the elections were held it not only formed the government in some States but emerged as a major Opposition power at the Centre. And got a further boost by the National Front's decision to form a government with its support. For any compromise with fundamentalist forces, as the Front leaders discovered at their expense, works to the advantage of the fanatics by giving credibility to their arguments. And at the same time it detracts from the secular platform by exposing it to the charge of rank opportunism.

It should have been expected but the National Front Government was caught unawares by L.K. Advani's decision to take out a countrywide *rath yatra* on the Ayodhya issue. Finally, reason asserted itself and V.P. Singh acted. Advani was arrested in Bihar and the Central Government fell. The country, after some more permutations and combinations of the worst kind, went in for another general election. And the BJP fought a grim, communal, ugly battle with no holds barred. It lost some ground in the States where it had ruled, but came back with more members in the Lok Sabha and a government in the sensitive State of Uttar Pradesh. One has not mentioned the numbers that have died all over the country in communal riots that broke out over the Ayodhya dispute. It is a matter of record that most of the victims were Muslims. And that riots took place in areas which had never before witnessed such carnage, leaving not just a trail of death and destruction but permanent scars in the Hindu-Muslim hearts. It was this sentiment that communal forces like the RSS and the BJP exploited, and added to in their election campaign.

Significantly, the Muslim fundamentalists who had been fairly aggressive at the beginning, slowly beat a retreat. In face of Hindu militancy the Muslim leaders went indoors and ugly concepts like the Adam Sena, floated to counter the Bajrang Dal, died a natural death. In fact persons like Syed Shahabuddin who had been fuelling Muslim communalism ran for shelter to the Communist Party offices, asking the CPI leadership to protect the minorities. Over the past months the Muslim 'leadership' has made the some muted noises, just loud enough to be heard by the minorities but not enough to provoke the Hindu reactionaries. That their hold over their own community is limited is proved by the fact that the Muslims all over the country still prefer to vote for the national parties than for individuals professing Islam as their creed. After all some great leaders of the Muslims of India have been non-Muslims—Gandhi, Nehru and, at one stage, Indira Gandhi.

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THE fear today is that the scars in the hearts of the common man have gone too deep. And the fear is compounded by the reality that the political and secular forces are too divided and weak to even begin the healing process. The Congress-I is the party in power at the Centre. And with an organisation that could be bolstered to counter the BJP and spread secularism, as an active ideology, throughout the country. But it is the Congress-I that has succumbed to the pulls and pressures of fundamentalism, to the extent of actively conniving with these forces to keep itself in power. Sanjay Gandhi openly sided with these forces. Indira Gandhi began flirting with the reactionaries but never openly so, taking a step back for every two steps forward. But her death fuelled the communal fire and on the Hindu-Sikh issue the RSS cadres came out openly and helped the Congress-I to power with a record number of seats in Parliament. Rajiv Gandhi tried to repeat the performance by pandering to the RSS and the BJP, obviously hoping that his call for *Ram Rajya* from Faizabad as the opening note for the 1989 general elections would entice the RSS and BJP cadres again. But they had tasted blood and had the leadership to realise that victory could be theirs without the Congress-I.

And today P.V. Narasimha Rao is playing the same game. Like the proverbial ostrich this Prime Minister buries his head in the sand every time the BJP passes by. He has clearly decided that his friend in the Opposition is the BJP, closer to him and his party as it has evolved over recent years in ideology (or rather the lack of it) and is willing to pay the price of overlooking their antics in return for power. Unfortunately, it is unlikely that Narasimha Rao will pay any price, at worst he will lose the Prime Ministership, but the country most definitely will. Under his leadership the Congress-I has still to emerge as a cohesive force, but the BJP certainly has consolidated itself. And it is acting with brash confidence, secure in the knowledge that the Congress-I has wilfully adopted the line of least resistance.

On the communal front there are several pointers indicating a tacit understanding between Narasimha Rao and the BJP. Madhavrao Scindia who tried to strike a new note by attacking the BJP at a press conference in Lucknow was silenced rather effectively within just a few days. His comments invited a hostile reaction from the BJP, and the Congress-I party refused to bail its Minster out by supporting his views. A few days later the Congress-I gave full support to the BJP candidate for the Deputy Speaker in the Lok Sabha while Scindia tried vainly to explain his compliance with the usual 'I am a disciplined member of the party', etc. etc.

The BJP Government in Uttar Pradesh passed an illegal notification acquiring land at and around the disputed shrine at Ayodhya. The requisite public enquiry was dispensed with and within weeks it was made clear that the BJP had acquired the land to facilitate the construction of the temple. All through there was no reaction from the Congress-I party or the government. The UP Congress-I refused to react and there was not a single statement from the veteran leaders against the BJP's action. The Prime Minister was urged by the National Front and Left leaders to intervene but he responded with a blank silence. A dharna by all senior Front and Left leaders did not elicit a reaction, with the Narasimha Rao Government's silence making it clear that it had decided against joining issue with the BJP on the Mandir-Masjid controversy.

Emboldened by the passive support the BJP stepped up its programme. The party President, Murli Manohar Joshi, is currently on an *ekta yatra* on the sensitive issue of Kashmir. Again the National Front and Left parties urged the Narasimha Rao Government to intervene. Again there was no reaction. On the eve of the *yatra* Narasimha Rao did convene a meeting of all the party leaders but did not come out with even a single suggestion to indicate that he was concerned over the problem. Opposition leaders came out of the meeting alleging that it had been convened only to give further publicity to the BJP programme. The *yatra* which began from Kerala is moving through north India now with no reaction from the Congress-I. Narasimha Rao made it clear that he would deal with this only as a law and order problem. It has become apparent that the BJP is not interested in violence this time around but is using the *yatra* to spread its own distorted, communal view of history to consolidate and expand its base throughout the country. Kashmir, even as Murli Manohar Joshi insists that his party does not really have anything against the minorities, is being projected as a Muslim issue and Gandhi as a 'nationalist' of the BJP hue. Surely, the country does not have to be littered with dead bodies to make the slumbering government realise the damage being caused to our body politic by the BJP and its *yatra*!

To appease the non-BJP Opposition, Narasimha Rao called a National Integration Council meeting recently to discuss the issues of Punjab and Kashmir. The meeting eventually blamed Pakistan for all that is happening here, and despite lengthy speeches by the members, failed entirely to understand the problem. The Prime Minister, for one, made it clear that it was a low priority meeting for him, as he had not even found the time to read his prepared text. Secondly, he did not refer to the spread of communalism throughtout the country, the role of the BJP in destabilising the heartland and remained content—like some others—to use Pakistan as the convenient scapegoat. It is almost clear that Narasimha Rao and the BJP are one on many issues, and in the face of this total silence on the issue of secularism it does seem that most Congressmen too are in agreement.

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TO give due credit, the National Front and the Left have been taking up the cudgels on behalf of secularism. The problem is that the Left seems to be content to function in its own pockets. And the Front is too divided by petty rivalries, oversized egos to launch an aggressive secular struggle which is the need of the hour. There is a definite need today for a Centrist secular alternative to the Congress-I—which has neither the will nor the ability to occupy this position—to combat the BJP and check the growth of communalism. The alternative has to be organised at the grassroots, articulate, cohesive so as to be perceived by the people as stable and strong. A squabbling Front, despite its best intentions, will never be seen by the electorate as an organisation capable of countering the BJP and despite the goodwill it has managed to generate in the rural areas it will find it impossible, as the last elections have proved, to convert this into votes.

The Front was formed as a secular experiment. But while it is premature to say that it has failed, it can definitely be said that it has failed to grow. At the same time it can be revived, activised and organised to form the secular alternative that the country so desperately needs. Secularism now can no longer remain a concept, for discussions by intellectuals at seminars and conferences. It has to be taken to the streets, to the mohallas and the galis as a living creed, as essential to the well-being of this country as food and water are for the human being.

It is a fallacy to think that secualrism is a preserve of the intellectuals. One has met more genuinely secular persons in the dusty villages of rural India, more tuned into the realities than their counterparts pontificating in urban drawing rooms. Recently at a public meeting in a village at Siddhartha Nagar one was astounded to hear a seemingly illiterate local man give the crowd a lecture on secularism. And he had the courage to tell them that they were not born into any religion, and were what they were by sheer coincidence. Birth, he said, only determined one's sex. The rest was wished onto the people by others born before them. One looked with some apprehension at the large crowd in an interior village, wondering how they would react to this truth. And the taciturn villagers who usually listen to speeches straightfaced burst into applause.

It is time that politicians drew a lesson from the rest of India. And regardless of prejudices cherished by the middle classes, took courage into their hands to seriously begin the fight against communalism. The arrest of Advani, or the dharnas against the BJP will be perceived as isolated incidents. Until and unless these are converted into a relentless movement. And that—at the risk of repeating oneself—can be done only by a strong, organised, ideological force that can not only counter the BJP but expose it as the anti-national party that it is. ■

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Terrorism, State Terrorism and Democratic Rights

RANDHIR SINGH

It is a privilege for me to be addressing this inaugural session of the Seventh State Conference of the Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee (APCLC) at Karimnagar, home of the great Telengana Struggle which, regardless of what happened to it afterwards, yet has a message, and the promise of other possibilities, for the people still struggling for a better life in this country, in Andhra Pradesh and elsewhere. I have my memories of those youthful years as a full-time Communist activist. It is a privilege also because the APCLC is no longer just another civil liberties organisation; today it is a movement, a movement of exceptional significance, representing as it does an outstanding example of effective people's intervention in the life and politics of our country—all the more exceptional and significant for the paucity of its material resources and the heavy odds against which it has to work.

Not formally associated with any democratic rights organisation, I have admired your work from a distance, as have many others. And everywhere in this country your courage, commitment and struggle have been a source of inspiration to those actively engaged in defending people's democratic rights or civil liberties. Among them are friends in the People's Union for Democratic Rights at Delhi, who have specifically asked me to convey their fraternal greetings to this Conference.

You have been admired and sought to be emulated but, together with other democratic rights organisations, you have also been criticised and condemned. Even as the Indian state and ruling class politics have been rapidly degenerating into a lawful as well as lawless authoritarianism in recent years, especially repressive when people protest or seek to organise and struggle, thereby making the presence and work of democratic rights organisations all the more necessary and urgent, though more risky also, these organisations have come to be regularly reviled and run down not only by the ruling elite or those manning its state apparatuses but also by others in all sorts of other places, especially the media.

The critics claim to be independent and impartial, above party, politics or classes; even more than 'law and order' they speak in the name of 'the nation', 'the unity and integrity of India'. It has become customary for them to refer to democratic rights organisations, with ill-concealed hostility and unease as 'a nuisance', 'do-gooder groups', 'the self-styled do-gooders', 'so-called defenders of civil liberties', 'these worthy organisations' and so on. At other times they are portrayed, attacked or dismissed, as 'front-organisations'—for 'anti-national' forces, 'terrorists' or 'secessionists', or, as in case of the APCLC, 'the Naxalites', etc.

I am not going to speak of the increasing importance, despite all the odds and all these critics, of your struggle in defence of democratic rights in our essentially undemocratically constituted society which, with its multiple crises, is daily becoming more undemocratic and oppressive for the people. There is more to learn from you here than to teach you. Nor is it for me to make a critical assessment of your work and offer suggestions—you are in every way better placed and equipped to undertake this exercise, and this is indeed what you shall be doing at this Conference. As a concerned citizen who believes that the issues of Terrorism, State Terrorism and Democratic Rights involve us all, today more than ever before, even if in apparently different ways, I shall be content to make a few observations on *how to think* about these issues, in the hope that a little more clarity here may lend a little more effectiveness to our struggle in defence of people's democratic rights. If there is something of the teacher or the academic about my argument, I can only ask you to overlook it as an occupational hazard, for this is how I have mainly functioned

The author is a former Professor of Political Theory, University of Delhi. His book, Of Marxism and Indian Politics, *published in 1990, generated considerable interest in intellectual circles and among activist groups. This article is the transcript of the inaugural address that he delivered at the Seventh State Conference of the Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee (held at Karimnagar on April 27-28, 1991).*

over the last forty years and more. Though, I would like to reassure you, it is not going to be an academic or 'scholarly' exercise. I shall try not to be boring and I shall also avoid the jargon, the 'ifs' and 'buts', and the Aesopian or 'now black, now white' manners of expression that sophistication in academic scholarship seems to entail these days. I will try to speak as simply and clearly as possible for I do want to be understood.

Mine will be in fact a straightforward political and partisan exercise in the sense that in a class-divided, exploitative society like ours all worthwhile thinking *is*, inevitably as it were, political and partisan. In such a society, on all important issues, in philosophy as in real life, neutrality is an illusion. Here everything said or done, or left unsaid or undone, helps one side or the other. And so it is with the issues of terrorism and democratic rights. I will readily concede that what I am going to say is nothing new or original. If, nevertheless, I have considered this exercise worthwhile, and chosen to so speak today, I could perhaps, in justification, appeal to Goethe who had asserted:

> **One must from time to time repeat what one believes in, proclaim what one agrees with and what one condemns.**

II

HOW does one think? The question is important, whatever the issue or the area of one's concern, because on this thinking, on the nature and adequacy of the understanding it provides, depends the nature and adequacy, the ultimate effectiveness, of how one acts in the matter. It is our diagnosis of a disease which determines its treatment. In the same way, it is our explanation or understanding of social reality, any aspect of it, which indicates the prescription, the necessary purposeful action on our part. An explanation thus always has a 'value slope', it determines the prescription as well.

Bourgeois social science, seeking to become 'truly scientific', has often so debated this issue as to ignore or effectively deny this dependence or determination. It has in fact sought to drive a wedge between explanation and prescription, between 'facts' and 'values', and made much of the dogmas of 'value freedom' or 'ethical neutrality' in social scientific enterprise. Much of this debate has been a wasteful exercise, illustrative only of a certain philosophical illiteracy among the social scientists concerned. This is not the place or occasion to explore the philosophical or methodological issues involved in this debate, issues which are necessarily political also. I have written and spoken of these elsewhere. Here I will make only two points which are immediately relevant to my argument.

In the first place it needs to be recognised that the issue of democratic rights directly impinges upon human interests in our society, one way or the other. Therefore disputation and conflict over them should not be a matter of any surprise. Centuries ago, the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes had, with characteristic insight, pointed out that if geométrical axioms were to be 'a thing contrary to the interest of men that have dominion', even these would be 'if not disputed, yet by the burning of all books of geometry, suppressed, as far as he whom it concerned was able'. Hobbes' insight in fact goes deeper to touch on a problem at the very heart of social sciences: truth here is always partisan. Unlike the physical or natural sciences which are fairly neutral politically, the social sciences, concerned as they are with class-divided societies, are full of political dynamite.

Truth here is not only partisan but also dangerous for the dominant classes, for it tends to affect their interests adversely. Truth becomes a matter for disputation and, if need be, suppression—and therefore also difficult to acquire. This is perhaps the most important reason—another, closely related to it, is its philosophical or methodological orientation—why so much of social science, far from being concerned with truth, is so much *apologetics* only which, given its esoteric sophistication, weird and unintelligible jargon—'Socspeak', Malcolm Cowley called it—and often obscurantist ideological role in society has compelled Stanislav Andreski to even speak of 'social sciences as sorcery'.

Be that as it may, our concern here is with democratic rights of the people. And the point is that they involve human interests, they do adversely affect the interests of those who have dominion in our society. Hence the disputation around them and their attempted suppression by the powers that be, suppression of the truth historically embodied in democratic rights. So it has been in the past, and so it is today, in our own troubled times.

My second point is theoretically the more important one. If our explanation always has a 'value-slope', if it is decisive in suggesting the prescription, the purposeful human intervention on our part, then, obviously, it matters *how* we generally go about explaining or understanding things. In other words, we need to be self-consciously aware of our philosophical or methodological orientation, or, if I may put it that way, aware of the 'philosophy' we have for coming to terms with the reality around us.

This indeed matters. It is this vital issue that the rebel students of Paris raised in the late sixties, when they asked of everyone who would speak to them: 'Where do you speak from?' They had well grasped the fact that everyone has a position to speak from, a philosophy so to speak, whether one knows or acknowledges it or not. Because everyone needs to have it to be able to live minimally as a human being.

To live postulates coping with the reality of the world around us. To cope or come to terms with this reality, to relate to it in an intelligent, purposive manner, we need to make sense of this reality. And this we do by explaining or understanding it as best as we may. Thus arise our most general ways of seeing and comprehending things, 'our more or less open, more or less clearly or consciously formulated assumptions, opinions, beliefs, principles, attitudes towards life, on which we habitually act, by which we indeed, live'—this is our philosophy. Philosophy thus understood is a precondition for any kind of sane existence in the world. It is in this sense that we indeed live by thinking, by ideas even more than we live by bread. That is why there is none so poor as not to have a philosophy of his own just as there is none so rich either as to be able to do without one. As A.E. Taylor pointed out long ago, the choice here is not whether one has a philosophy or not but only what kind of philosophy one does or shall have.

'What kind of philosophy'—this immediately draws our attention to an important dimension of the philosophic situation around us. It is a fact that people have generally found the social reality around them rather difficult to cope with for, throughout recorded history and in our own times, it has been an ugly and painful reality, the reality of a class-divided, exploitative and diversely oppressive society. A genuinely *human* coping would be to seek to change it into a more human society. But such an effort to change requires, at the very least, a true explanation of things as well as guts to act in a revolutionary manner—a combination rather rare to come by in real life. Unable to change it, the people learn to accept this ugly and painful reality—but they can do so only by interpreting it differently, often in a necessarily false manner. Necessarily, because the strain of a true explanation coupled with the inability to carry out the change it demands is simply too much to bear.

In a sense, unable to change the *objective* reality around them, people so change themselves *subjectively* as to be able to accept this reality, with the least strain. Unable to think of themselves as exploited or victimised by an unjust society and yet incapable of doing anything much about it, the people, especially the poor and oppressed, have generally found it more comforting, certainly less punishing, to think of themselves as correctly placed by a just society and here the will of God, law of *karma*, vagaries of fate, teachings of various religions and 'the enshrined wisdom' of assorted moral philosophies, they all help. If the risks involved in the discovery of truth about a class-divided society have persistently pushed social sciences in the direction of *apologetics* and even 'sorcery', the difficulties involved in changing such a society have left their massive mark on social thinking in the form of flourishing social myths, and any number of limited, mistaken or false philosophies. Limited, mistaken or false—such philosophies or ideas have helped the common people everywhere to survive, to live on without going insane. The majority of our own people, the other half of 'the Indian nation', are even today living more by such ideas than by bread—the bread is simply not available most of the time, unlike the ideas which are always there to help interpret and its non-availability. It is thus that they come to accept the ugly and painful reality of their poverty and oppression as part of a natural or divinely-ordained arrangement of things.

It is one of the many ironies of their life that while the heads of the poor and oppressed are indeed their own, physically, the ideas in their heads belong to others, they correspond not to their own interests, but to the interests of the rich and powerful in society who oppress and exploit them. In this sense, the poor and oppressed are really the philosophers of the rich and powerful, all the time reinforcing the latter's domination over themselves.

But this is not the case with only our supposedly ignorant or illiterate common people. So many of us, in our half of society, may be thinking more consciously but we generally do so with 'a false consciousness' in the sense that we are not aware of the real origins of our ideas, the practical-political interests they correspond to or whom they really serve. All too often, even as we too find it comforting to go along with God, *karma*, *fate*, religious or moral techings and the rest of it, we live our daily life by the prevalent 'philosophy of common sense'—'what can one man do', 'men are selfish by nature', 'the poor have always been with us', 'Indians are all corrupt', 'politics is dirty business', 'there is much to be said on both sides', etc. etc.—which helps us evade real issues, difficult choices, all social responsibility, and accept or endorse the established order of things.

I might add, the situation in the academy and such other places is hardly any better, only the evasion and the acceptance or endorsement is more subtle and sophisticated. The philosophic underpinning of most of what goes on in our schools and universities only ensures that 'the educated' are duly socialised into the existing social order, that is, come to feel 'at home with exploitaton and domination'...Indeed all of us, 'the illiterate' and 'the educated', the academic and the scholar, the intellectual and the journalist, the democratic rights activist and his critic, need to answer the question: 'Where do you speak from?', 'Whose philosopher you really are?'

'Where do you speak from?' is an important question for the democratic rights activists for it points to the need of having a philosophy or methodological orientation which is as rational and scientific as they can possibly make it, in order to ensure greater clarity and effectiveness for their struggle. But the question is important for their critics also, perhaps more so because they are generally far less aware of the issue involved, sharing as they do, despite pretensions, in the currently dominant mode of thinking in our society. And this mode as a rule, Marx had pointed out, is the mode of the dominant classes. These classes, no doubt, always have their 'hired prize fighters'. But the critic may well discover that even when he is subjectively most honest and upright, the position from which he speaks is limited, mistaken, or even false in a manner as to yield prescriptions and politicswhich correspond to the interests of those who have dominance in our society and that these interests demand a defence and justification of the state's current assault on the democratic rights of the Indian people.

III

HOW does the dominant mode of thinking deal with the issues of terrorism, state terrorism and democratic rights? And how do we need to think about them? I shall take a quick critical look at the basic limitation of the dominant mode in its treatment of terrorism and democratic rights; state terrorism is simply an 'unproblem' for it stands understood and justified as a corollary of its treatment of the problem of terrorism. State terrorism is something which only needs to be defended. My critical comment shall also be suggestive of a different, more adequate way of thinking about these issues.

The dominant mode is really a commonsense way of thinking, which furnished with academic frills has even come to be raised to the status of 'Method' in social sciences. Its is a loudly proclaimed 'clear-headed' concern with 'here and now', with 'hard facts' and 'things as they are', that refuses to look deeper into them or go beyond them—any such effort would be dismissed as impermissible 'metaphysics'.

In one sense such concern is justifiable, indeed necessary, for this is where the search for all scientific understanding begins. It begins but does not end here. 'Sound common-sense' of the dominant mode, however, stays put with the immediate and the obvious, the apparent or the visible, with facts apart from other facts. The complexity of things, phenomena and processes is itself sought to be reduced, abstracted and isolated into 'facts' and treated as given once for all, outside of their history and their more or less important interconnections. 'The immediately observable, measurable *fact*' becomes 'that Moloch', as Paul Baran once put it, 'which is always seeking to devour analytic thought in contemporary social science'. It has certainly served to obscure social reality, 'the nature of things', as Marx called it, for things or facts exist, above all, in their history and their interconnections. In fact, the more of this history and interconnections one is able to group, the more of truth one has.

Let me illustrate with a couple of very simple examples. It is customary with economists and politicians of different hues to regularly refer to the fact of our surplus foodstocks as a sign of success, indeed the growing health of our economy and society—gone are the PL-480 days of foodgrain imports. This appears quite obvious and convincing. But seen in relation to only one other fact (I am leaving out the rest) that nearly half our population regularly goes without food, that we are unable to bring our surplus food and our own hungry people together, these stocks would be indicative of something entirely different, they are far more the sign of a failure, indeed a certain shameful sickness of our economy and society. Incidentally, however you define this failure or sickness, it has something to do with the much celebrated 'market-friendliness' of our economy and society.

Again, it is customary in our country, with its 'spiritual traditions', to see and speak of 'charity' as a virtue, the mark indeed of a good man and a good society. This too appears obvious enough. But next time you are in the mood to secure salvation for your soul, try giving charity to your best friend—and the truth will be out. Even a cursory search for its history and interconnections will reveal that charity implies a society which has degenerated into one of gross inequality, of givers and takers of charity. Recognised thus, 'charity' is a kind of sickness in human relations, it is far more the mark of a bad society. In a society of equals there will be no such virtue as charity. Those still retaining their souls for souls too are a matter of history and interconnections—will have to look for other devices 'to arrange for their well-being in the hereafter'.

Engels had something to say about the way of thinking or apprehending the world which I have been discussing. He chose to describe it as 'the metaphysical mode of thought'. In that masterpiece of popular exposition of Marxism, *Anti-Duhring*, which, despite its critics, all sorts of 'Marxist', 'ex-Marxist' or 'post-Marxist' experts, remains unrivalled in its elucidation of the Marxist way of thinking, Engels noticed that 'at first sight (the metaphysical) mode of thought seems to us extremely plausible because it is the mode of thought of commonsense'. But he found it to be 'onesided, limited, abstract' because it studies things 'in their isolation, detached from the whole vast interconnection of things; and therefore not in their motion, but in their repose; not in their life, but in their death'. He added:

> in considering individual things it loses sight of their connections; in contemplating their existence it forgets their coming into being and passing away; in looking at them at rest it leaves their motion out of account;...it cannot see the woods for the trees....

IV

AND so it is with the metaphysical mode's treatment of the issues of terrorism and democratic rights.

Armed actions—protests, resistance or struggles—in different parts of the country, in Punjab, Kashmir and Assam, Andhra Pradesh and Bihar, the North-East, and elsewhere, which have mostly come to be described as 'terrorism', have an extraordinary variety about them. As Indian phenomena, they do share a certain social-material basis and historical context and they have all arisen within an ongoing structure of politics and power-relations, often in response to an utterly unscrupulous and myopic ruling class politics. But they have in each case a specificity of causation and characteristics; each expresses its own kind of grievances against and alienation from the system and the powers that be, each poses a challenge to the Indian state but a different kind of challenge; each seeks a different kind of future for itself, and so on. The armed aspect which they share notwithstanding, they represent social and political developments of great significance, each distinct from the other.

All this and more is of decisive importance for any proper understanding of the ongoing 'terrorist violence' in India. But in the metaphysical mode of thought all this and more is precisely what comes to be ignored, all distinctions are blurred or obliterated, and everything, all such protests, resistance or struggles are simply lumped together into one omnibus thing called 'terrorism'. The obvious and visible similarities are focussed upon and a certain autonomy which their violent dimension necessarily comes to acquire is inflated into an independent factor, indeed their defining characteristic, as if this violence has no social basis, has nothing at all to do with the economy of the country or its politics, including the politics of its ruling classes. Violence is simply abstracted from its varied histories and still more varied interconnections, isolated and reduced to produce an essentially depoliticised composite phenomenon and its equally depoliticised composite image, 'terrorism', complete with bombs, landmines and rocket-launchers, the AK-47s and Kalashnikovs, and 'the dreaded terrorist', an image suggestive of only ruthlessness and inhumanity, delinquency, irrationality and fanaticism, and, of course, foreign linkages.

'Terrorism' now is simply a resort to senseless, utterly uncivilised forms of violence, a foreign inspired social or political deviance. It becomes a label of defamation, a means of ostracising those branded as 'terrorist', excluding them from any human standing. They are the 'outsiders', 'foreign agents', a menace to an otherwise peaceful and orderly society. The image is indeed powerful, evoking fear and hostility, which are then sought to be reinforced with the help of equally abstract, mechanically posed counter-images of 'non-violence' and 'democratic politics', 'the rule of law' and a fetishised 'Constitution, 'judicial processes' and 'law-abiding ordinary people' and so on, including the almost mythical 'national mainstream', which nobody knows what is and where it is flowing. Academic scholarship, indigenous or foreign-aided, lends its prestige and sophistication to this construct of 'terrorism' as it comes to be nicely aligned with the demand of the establishment for an exclusive focus on violence or the threat of violence.

It is this essentially depoliticised image or construct of 'terrorism' and 'the terrorist' which is then promoted by the state through the massive regime of modern propaganda servicing it today its own electronic devices, with television bringing the image visibly alive right into our homes, and the rest of public and private media, including 'the national press'. A nationwide 'selling of terrorism' takes place. The selling certainly has its variety and flexibility, but underlying it is the media's ready adoption of the official identification of terrorism and the terrorists. As issues of history and socio-political basis are pushed out of consideration, the discourse comes to be confined almost entirely to ways of meeting a self-evident terrorist threat to society.

Simultaneously, state terrorism is not seen as another form of 'terrorism', it is rationalised and defended, public sanction secured for it, as a means of countering this threat. Compelled to admit the obviously lawless and terrorist acts of the state, they are justified simply as necessary counter-terrorism. We are even informed that terrorism is a worldwide phenomenon now, just like corruption. But, given the priorities of the ruling classes, while nothing much can or need be done about corruption, terrorism has to be ruthlessly put down. There is no escaping from this responsibility, even if you insist on calling it 'state terrorism'. If the deeper, more specific factors underlying 'terrorism' still come up for considertion, they are either dismissed as no longer relevant or sought to be taken care of by that characteristically evasive response: 'of course, but...' The argumentation turns into a feat of system-supportive word-management, almost an intellectual legerdemain. It is thus that the depoliticised abstraction 'terrorism', well-manipulated by the powers that be, comes to serve the most brutal form of ruling class politics—state terrorism.

The manipulation is facilitated by the fact that all the 'mainstream' political parties, including those of the established Left, come to subscribe to this depoliticised image. Their continuous contention for power in the state notwithstanding, they have a consensus here—shared by the assorted image and opinion-makers—based upon everybody's commitment to nationalism of one kind or the other. Nationalism as an ideology covers up the essential character of Indian social reality whence 'terrorism' ultimately springs, and helps unite the large social audience behind the ruling class politics in a war against terrorism.

Occasionally there is the appeal to the deviant to give up the bad and violent new ways and rejoin 'the national mainstream' whatever it is and whereever it flows as if some morality play is on. But the appeal is neither meant nor taken seriously. In the 'national consensus', the 'terrorist' remains and has to be treated as an 'outsider', an enemy, a threat to the nation, its unity and integrity. There is intermittent talk of 'political solution', 'restoration of the political process', 'political and economic initiatives' and 'packages' of all sorts—the less the ruling classes have to offer the more their emphasis on 'packaging' these days. But this remains so much rhetoric, mere plays in a deadly political game. Overwhelmed by their own image of 'terrorism', and their ineptitude and opportunism as well, the powers that be are simply incapable of any such initiatives.

Perhaps a policy of drift has its own advantages. In any case, a political solution is impossible for them until they recognise 'terrorism' as a *genuine political problem*—rather a set of political problems, problems with history and interconnections, becoming daily more difficult *politically*. Despite noises to the contrary, it continues to be seen primarily as a 'law and order' problem. 'Firm action', 'the hard option' persists as the only viable solution, 'a more meaningful alternative' indeed. Counter-terrorism reappears, again and again, as the easier option for the ruling classes. The vested interests that have grown around this option, involving the police and paramilitary forces, bureaucracy, politicians and sundry other dubious elements, only facilitate the persistence of this option—and state terrorism continues. Ever new justifications are found for it, including its currently fashionable rationalisation as a means of creating those ever elusive 'conditons', 'congenial atmosphere' they also call it, for a political solution.

But there is no solution here, nor any real success. On the contrary, as I wrote four years back, apropos the emerging state terrorism in Punjab:

> its success, such as it may be, will turn out to be even worse in its consequences than its failure.

The politics of state terrorism has only ensured the total alienation of the Sikh people not with the Khalistani militants, they are today even less with the Indian state. And, except for some odd pitifully small ultra-Left groups, no other politics is in sight. Therein lies the tragedy of Punjab—today a tragedy for the Sikhs, the Punjabis, including Hindus, and the Indian people as a whole.

State terrorism as a political option has fared no better elsewhere in the country; it has produced only tragedies for the people. Yet the powers that be, in government or in Opposition, may criticise or condemn, even 'flay' each other *factionally*, they don't know and can't do anything different or better. Even the best they can offer, but in their ineptitude and factious lack of will do not, is only a cooption or accommodation within their own brand of 'democratic politics', which is incapable of confronting the really important issues underlying the explosive presence of 'terrorism' in different parts of the country today. They can only seek to hide the utter bankruptcy of their option by still more vigorous nationalist posturing. Not only does the rhetoric around 'the nation' or 'the unity and integrity of India' grow louder, there are new warnings against 'underminig the morale of the police force' or 'tarnishing the image of the army', etc. etc.

V

BANKRUPTCY of this option apart, it does have its own advantages for the ruling classes. It is not merely a question of its various political formations or groups within them, 'patriots' all, playing their petty political games with 'terrorism' or terrorism-related 'nationalism' in their quest for power in the state. Far more important is the fact that a situation of terror and counter-terror, despite the risks involved, yet serves their more basic class needs. For one thing, it facilitates the ongoing ideological manipulation of the people. The bogey of 'secessionism', 'destabilisation', 'threat to unity and integrity of India', etc. is invoked to divert people away from their own concerns and mobilise them behind ruling class politics in the name of defending the 'nation' or maintaining 'national unity'. Their own politics, their struggles for a better life are delegitimised as inopportune in the prevailing, supposedly temporary, situation; even the suspension of democratic rights, for the duration, is demanded. For another, this situation provides the ruling classes with the additional pretext and public sanction to further expand and strengthen the repressive state apparatuses and use them to defend their general class interests in the name of fighting terrorism.

Thus, for example, we have new laws like Terrorist and Distruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA), which in its attack on democratic rights undermines almost every safeguard, provided by the Indian Constitution and violates all principles of liberal jurisprudence and natural justice—its definition of terrorist and distruptive activities is wide enough to cover anything and everything that those in authority may choose to find embarrassing, inconvenient or undesirable. And we have more of modernised and better-equipped police and security forces, the army's increasingly active role in 'civilian conflict', and the state's everyday resort to extra-legal means—all this over and above the normal repressive machinery of the state. This state apparatus, ideologically refurbished and materially augmented, and rationalised as 'a bulwark against terrorism' is now available for use against not just the 'terrorists', but others also, above all, the people struggling in defence of their interests and for a more just and equitable social existence.

And it has been so used against every form of democratic movements, popular struggle or social activism, against trade unions and striking workers, and those seeking to defend the environment; against women and dalits protesting the atrocities committed on them; against the landless and the adivasis engaged in a battle of survival; against journalists and academics, poets and cultural workers; in fact anyone deemed inconvenient or undesirable by the state, including of course the civil rights activists. Such has been the experience not only in Punjab, Kashmir and Assam, Andhra Pradesh and Bihar, or the North-East, but everywhere else in the country. Not surprisingly, even those who opposed the new legislation and repressive practices when in Opposition have found selective recourse to them useful when in power themselves—among the victims have been the Opposition members in Congress-I ruled States and Congress-I members in the States ruled by the Opposition, but, needless to repeat, the common people and those struggling with or for them in all the States. It is thus that state terrorism, spreading within democratic forms and without them, is contributing to the rise of an authoritarian, ever more repressive and anti-people state in India.

Needless to add, when the civil or democratic rights organisations protest and seek to intervene on behalf of the people against the growing terrorism or lawlessness of the state, they are seen as 'a nuisance', dismissed as 'do-gooders', denounced as 'front organisations', and finally, identified with 'terrorism' itself, condemned as 'anti-national'.

VI

IF 'things', abstracted from their concrete socio-historical existence, come to be easily depoliticised, 'their mental images', that is, 'ideas', too may come to be subjected to a similar treatment. It is thus that alongside the depoliticisation that 'terrorism' represents, we are witnessing an increasing depoliticisation of the idea of democratic rights into a rapidly spreading version of 'human rights'.

Lewis Namier, whose work gave rise to a whole new school of history-writing, argued for and practised a historiography which pushed ideas out of history. He sought a history voided of ideas and, as a conservative, a politics voided of 'political philosophy', or 'programme and ideals'—he hailed such politics as a token of 'greater national maturity'. In a parallel development in philosophy, scholars have sought to push history, as well as politics, out of ideas. Philosophy properly understood and practised is analysis, which easily becomes a timeless elucidation of ideas or concepts. Ideas are divorced from things they represent, concepts from the reality they are the concepts of ideas and concepts

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extrapolated from their concrete existence, their historical context or socio-economic inter-connections, are transformed into weightless counters which are then manipulated at will, by themselves or in arbitrary conflation with other such idea-counters, generally in the service of conservative, often admittedly anti-radical, politics.

In political philosophy proper this is well exemplified in the work of Isaiah Berlin, Karl Popper or Michael Oakeshott in their treatment of the ideas or concepts of 'liberty'—'negative' and 'positive', 'historicism' and 'open' or 'closed' society, or 'rationalism' and 'tradition', respectively. Such treatment, especially as analysis, has indeed served as an antidote to sloppiness in our thought and expression, it has helped light up many dark corners, resolved ambiguities of language and argument, and generally made for greater precision and clarity in our thinking. But if 'one-sided, limited abstract' concern with *facts,* as they *appear* to be, has been a Moloch 'seeking to devour analytic thought in contemporary social science, such philosophical exercises in their flight from the real world, the world of facts as they *really* are, have tended to denude social thinking of its substantive empirical content and ethical concerns.

In any case, an atemporal, dehistoricised treatment of an idea or a concept easily makes for its 'depoliticisation'. And it is in this manner that the concept of democratic rights or civil liberties is undergoing a certain depoliticisation these days. As history and politics are pushed out of it, what is emerging is a particular, abstracted and almost bloodless, use of the term 'human rights'. This has been a much used term for a long time, essentially expressive of some or similar concerns as democratic rights or civil liberties and for certain purposes its use is indeed most appropriate. But it always had a certain history and context-lessness about it, referring as it does to that rather abstract category 'human being'. Ever amenable to easy dehistoricisation, it is a dehistoricised and therefore depoliticised use of 'human rights' which has come into circulation with remarkable speed and strength in recent years, its trajectory rather closely related to that of the other abstraction, 'terrorism', produced by the metaphysical mode of thinking.

As with 'terrorism' in one way, now with 'human rights in another, economic-structural basis of democratic rights, the concrete historical, political and cultural context of their existence as well as the state's attack on them is obscured. Conflicts in society and the processes generating them which are always historically specific and the equally specific contradictions between the people and the state which make democratic rights an important issue in real life, come to be pushed out of consideration. The rough and troublesome specificities of situation and struggle, conflict and confrontation smoothed out, an universalised abstraction, 'human rights' takes over, leaving everyone free to make moral demands, pass ethical judgements, or play politics in its name. These 'human rights' won't hurt anyone, least of all those who deny or violate the democratic rights of the people. The violation of democratic rights can in fact go hand in hand with a defence of 'human rights'.

The worst violations of the one the world over can parade themselves as the best defenders of the other. A Reagan or a Bush is the man for our times. Sanitised from the grim reality of life, from the economy and politics of our essentially undemocratic times, 'human rights' becomes an eminently fit subject for discourse, and a little later, almost inevitably, for discourse over changing the terms of discourse!

It is thus that 'human rights' as a subject for study is arriving on the academic scene the world over, characteristically devoid of much concern for the people or involvement with democratic rights movement; department and courses at universities, long or short-range research projects at centres, old and new, foreign sponsorship and funding, especially by the American agencies well-known for their role in such matters in Latin America and elsewhere in the Third World, 'human rights' seminars and conferences, national and international, all the time somewhere or the other, which governments violating democratic rights, yet in search of legitimacy, are not afraid to sponsor, fund or join in.... A new breed of human rights academics is on the way, just like the far too many we already have in areas become fashionable from time to time opening up new, exciting possibilities for a career and for peer-group scholarship. The mundane interests of these academics apart, 'the empiricist method', 'specialisation' and 'functional rationality' rampant in the academy will easily accommodate and sustain this 'new discipline' as they would describe it.

The comments by *Economic and Political Weekly,* made a few months back, remain relevant:

> Like tribal art and ethnic handcrafts, human rights appear to have become chic among among members of the establishment. Delhi is hosting a World Human Rights Congress in December. The External Affairs Ministry is partly financing it and has put a senior Joint Secretary to officially represent it on the preparatory committee of the Congress which is going to be held in the five-star Maurya Sheraton hotel in the capital.
>
> The Capital's elite university, Jawaharlal Nehru University, has even started a Human Rights Teaching

> and Research Programme. The Director of this programme is in charge of organising the World Human Rights Congress. Curiously enough, this gentleman has never been known to have taken up any human rights issue, or sign his name to any petition or appeal protesting violation of civil liberties within India. Academic discourse on human rights at international fora is apparently not only a safer option, but also probably a convenient stepping stone to recognition in right circles.
>
> Nothing can be more hypocritical than the government's patronage of the World Congress. New Delhi is yet to ratify the Optional Protocol to the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, and the Convention against Torture. By refusing to ratify the Optional Protocol the government is denying private civil liberties groups in India the right to approach the UN Human Rights Committee with cases of violation of human rights of Indian citizens, and disallowing the UN Committee to investigate into such cases. The government is violating almost every day the major provisions of the International Convention which prohibits detention without trial, trial in camera, killing of citizens, torture in police custody, etc. One wonders how the official representatives of the government at the World Human Rights Congress will defend themselves if asked about the detention of thousands of people under NSA and TADA in Kashmir, Punjab and other parts of the country, or about custodial deaths, or about indiscriminate police firings upon peasants and workers fighting for their democratic rights. But will there be anyone in the Congress to ask such questions? Will the guests dare to offend the hosts?
>
> Under the existing laws, victims of police torture or next of kin of those killed in police custody, have no statutory right to compensation. Yet, the government is spending several lakhs on preparations for this jamboree on 'human rights'...

Incidentally, the Government of India still refuses to allow Amnesty International and similar other civil liberties organisations to visit several parts of the country where the state's violation of democratic rights has become a routine affair.

VII

IT is the dominance of 'the metaphysical mode of thought' even with those on the Left who otherwise profess the Marxist, that is, the dialectical mode, which has over the years helped the ruling classes to define and pre-empt the terrain of Indian politics for their own purposes. They have posed the issues in this mode, asked the questions accordingly, and secured the answers they wanted to have. For example, this is how it has been in the recent crisis-ridden years: 'Are you for the Sikh/Kashmiri/ULFA militants or the nation? For secessionism or the unity and integrity of India? For violence or democratic politics? For the Congress-I Government or that of the National Front? For communalism or secularism? For reservations or against them?' and so on.

It is not difficult to see that in each case the choices are really foreclosed in the sense that whatever the answer, it lines you up behind one or the other kind of ruling class politics. The way the issues are posed consistently ignores the larger context and the deeper determinant interconnections dissociates the issues from any consideration of socio-economic structures, class domination, or ruling class politics, and thus ensures that radical or revolutionary choices simply don't come up as answers, as real historical possibilities.

It is the same with the metaphysical mode's posing of the issues of terrorism, state terrorism and democratic rights. A certain sectarianism apart, it is the philosophical surrender here and the consequent surrender to bourgeois politics which has prevented the established Left as a whole from coming out actively in defence of democratic rights today, as their forbears, the united communist movement once did. During the British rule, defence of democratic rights was a major concern with the CPI, it was seen as a part of the Indian people's struggle for freedom and better life.

VIII

DEMOCRATIC rights have to be defended above all against their violation by the Indian state today. But for an effective defence these violations must not be seen, as the liberals generally do, as the result of some mistaken policies, unfortunate 'aberrations' or 'distortions', on the part of the Indian state. A Nehruvian vision of the post-colonial state has contributed much to cloud matters here. Nor is it enough to recognise this state, as activists, even 'theoreticians' of the civil liberties movement often do, only as a system of power, overgrown and much too-centralised and standing over and above the civil society, and therefore insensitive to the interests of citizens and intolerant of diversity, even prone to abuse its power, to dominate and repress, to homogenise.

Such a view of the state has gained new endorsement these days because it is central to the argument of that most significant development in our social and political life, which has gone on to become an important, though somewhat problematic feature of contemporary social scientific concerns as well as social acitivism, namely, 'identitarianism', as I would like to describe it. I am not concerned with this development here except to point out that drawing our attention to the multiform oppressions prevalent in our society, as against the conventional focus on the economic oppression, it sees an overcentralised and powerful state, 'the at once homogenising and colonising juggernaut', as the enemy against which the rights and interests of our long oppressed and more disadvantaged social groups, 'identities' as they have come to be called—minor nationalities or ethnic groups, religious minorities, dalits, tribals, women, and so on—have to be fought for, won and defended.

In this perspective, even when they have crossed the traditional liberal threshold, studies have focussed on the state's obviously visible, politically repressive features but rarely gone deep enough to see its economic basis or class character. That remains a forbidden threshold to be nodded at or flirted with occasionally, but never to be crossed. The state is studied as such but not as the organiser of society in the interests of the class (exploitative) structure as a whole, a function which decisively conditions its own structure and organisation. The state is seen in dissociation from this class structure, whose defence, of course with necessary modifications, is its defining characteristic. It is not seen that the Indian state does not merely *happen* to be violent or repressive, it is *inherently* so, by virtue of the society it presides over; it guards and keep going, violently if necessary, an inherently violent society because it is a society of myriad economic, social and cultural oppressions.

As a result, when it occurs, state violence is analysed in terms of violations of democratic rights but not as class violence, as an expression of class domination or policies, as a part of the ongoing open or hidden class struggle in society. A certain flirtation with the notion of class may be there, but there is no recognition that state power in India is also a form of class power and that this has its relevance for any effective struggle in defence of democratic rights of the Indian people against the Indian state.

It is this classlessness of their 'theorising' which primarily accounts for the fact that even with scholars who otherwise seek radical, even revolutionary changes in society, their discourse is strong only in its idealism or liberal rhetoric, that there is such a gap between the enormity of the oppressions they describe so well and the painful pettiness, the fragmentary and feeble nature, of the political options that emerge from this description, that even as they speak of 'state against democracy' or 'a terrorist state', and warn other intellectuals against cooption, they themselves are quite comfortable with this state whenever the occasion arises, missing no opportunity to serve it as 'inside political advisers', pleading for the long lost 'Nehruvian consensus' or new 'social contracts' for 'nation-building', that the rhetoric of 'grassroots politics' and 'movements from below' is accompanied by yet other developmental solutions from above, offered in Planning Commissions and elsewhere. The critical intellectual, in spare time at least, gets reduced to an 'intellect worker' as Paul Baran once defined him. This is, in its own way, indeed tragic. For these scholars know better and mean well by the people. But then theory is a cruel mistress, like history. And like history, it has its tragedies too.

IX

THE need then is to move away from the metaphysical mode of thought, its 'specific narrow-mindedness', as Engels called it, and try to understand the issues of terrorism, state terrorism and democratic rights in a dialectical manner so that we don't miss the wood for the trees. It is not my purpose to explore these essentially interrelated issues as they have emerged in different parts of the country. Here I can only again insist that we need to understand them in their 'whole vast interconnections' within the larger social reality of contemporary India. This will include, depending upon the particular issue, the more or less important interconnections in the areas of history, of caste, gender and ecology, religion, ideology and culture, ethnicity and nationality, and so on. But central to this understanding are the interconnections in the realm of economy and the ruling class politics spawned by it.

Even a cursory look at it from below will reveal that ours is a historically specific form of capitalist economy in which all the evils of a somewhat lumpen or comparadore capitalist development, semi-feudalism, bureaucratisation and bloated bourgeois politics daily enter into and reinforce each other. There is unequal and uneven development with its 'two-nations' and the ever-widening gulf between the two and an 'internal colonialism' at work in the more backward parts of the country, which together are turning all the divides and fissures of our society, such as class, caste, religion, language, region, ethnicity or nationality, etc. explosive and giving rise to strong disintegrative tendencies everywhere. An overcentralised and homogenising state, which is yet a weak state, only makes for more disintegration. Old organised struc-

We do not believe in a rigid autarchy, but we do want to make India self-sufficient in regard to her needs as far as this is possible. We want to develop international trade, importing articles which we cannot easily produce and exporting such articles as the rest of the world wants from us. We do not propose to submit to the economic imperialism of any other country or to impose our own on others. We believe that the nations of the world can co-operate together in building a world economy which is advantageous for all and in this work we shall gladly co-operate. But this economy cannot be based on the individual profit motive, nor can it subsist within the framework of imperialist system. It means a new world order, both politically and economically, and free nations co-operating together for their own as well as the larger good.

Jawaharlal Nehru

(October 4, 1940)

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tures of exploitation and oppression persist and myriad new oppressions, insecurities and alienations have emerged—'We suffer not only from the living but from the dead' also, as Marx once put it.

The corrupt and criminalising mark of this socio-economic development is there on everything in our society—there are no jobs or ideals for the youth, nor any vision and values for the people. Ours is a society in deep social and moral crisis. We are indeed paying the 'terrible costs of not changing the existing order'—Nehru's words, spoken in an obviously more lucid Marxist moment. Unable to move forward in a revolutionary manner this society provides a continuing social-material basis for all sorts of ideologically muddled protests around genuine grievances and any number of divisive or disruptive anti-people developments.

These protests and developments, ranging from 'terrorism' to communalism, have indeed materialised, above all, as the consequences of a politics dominated by the ruling classes. As practised by their different political formations in recent years, in its utterly unscruplous internecine competition for power and ineptitude of leadership, this politics has been producing one after another interactable problems for the ruling classes and tragedies for the people.

Even a cursory search for interconnections will show that within the larger socio-economic context of Indian society, it is the ruling class politics at the Centre and in the States which has, in each case, created and later sustained the political problems which have become or come to be perceived as 'the terrorist problem' in different parts of the country—an entirely indigenous creation which others, imperialism and its allies, are taking full advantage of. At the other end, bankrupt and increasingly bereft of legitimacy in forcing the problems of its own generation, this politics, its powerlessness making it only more repressive all the time, has created and come to sustain 'a terrorist state', making the defence of democratic rights all the more necessary and urgent, though more risky also.

To advance these *general* propositions is not to deny the part of the *particular* in the emergence of 'terrorism', state terrorism and democratic rights as crucial issues at a given time or place in one part of the country or another. A recognition of their specific context and nature is in fact of decisive importance in each case, for this is how and where the state's violation of democratic rights occurs and where therefore the defence of democratic rights has to be undertaken. 'A concrete analysis of a concrete situation' is necessary, as always. But a dialectical as against a 'metaphysical' orientation in such analysis will give us a more adequate understanding of the specificities involved and make for a more effective struggle, here and now, in defence of democratic rights.

X

I don't need to pursue this subject any further. A slightly extended comment may be found in my *Of Marxism and Indian Politics*. I shall conclude with a somewhat different last point.

It is quite common for the critics or opponents of democratic rights organisations to question their protest against state terrorism and charge them with 'keeping silent' over terrorism of 'the terrorists'. They are constantly called upon to condemn all violence, to act in a 'responsible' manner and be at least equally condemnatory of 'terrorist violence'. The alleged silence is even interpreted and condemned as support for terrorism. This is nothing new. Civil liberties organisations the world over have regularly faced such charges, similar criticism and condemnation. This criticism or condemnation, however, is entirely misconceived. I am not here concerned to discuss the overall nature and scope of the work of democratic rights or civil liberties organisations, but it is certainly legitimate for these organisations to make the distinction between terrorism of the state and terrorism resorted to by private individuals or groups. Whereas in a law-based state like India, there exists an elaborate code, an entire ensemble of laws, procedures, institutions and enforcing agencies to deal with private violence or lawlessness, there is nothing comparable, no genuine checks or controls, to take care of peaceful or violent lawlessness of the state, which is potentially, and often in actual practice, the most powerful violator of democratic rights in society.

It is this absence in our system of credible institutional safeguards against the illegal acts and terrorism committed or backed by the state and its functionaries that, more than anything else, makes the presence of democratic rights organisations necessary. These organisations locate their primary concern, *the* task as it were, precisely here—in the paramount need to protect the people's rights against their violation by the state or with its backing in one from or another. Such being the very *raison d'etre* of these organisations, to ask them to do anything else, least of all take care of private lawlessness and violence, or still worse, provide justifications for the state's own violence or lawlessness is indeed misconceiving their role in our society. These organisations are not there to strike a balance between two kinds of terrorism. By their very self-definition, their work lies elsewhere.

This is not to ignore or in any way underestimate the problem that private violence has come to be in our society today—its ever-growing level, scale and diversity are indeed frightening. More and more of the conflicts and tensions generated in this society, above all, by its economy and politics, are seeking to express themselves outside the constitutionally ordained institutional frameworks, including the electoral process which has witnessed a steady decline in popular participation in recent years. If there is widespread socio-political turbulence in society, there is also the widespread, not unjustified, impression that peaceful ways seldom work and issues arrest political attention only through recourse to violence. But any adequate response to the problem of this spreading violence in our society demands, at the very least, the recognition that while any form of violence in due course acquires a certain autonomous dimension, it always arises on and is sustained by a given socio-material basis, and that its various forms, various because of differences of causation, context and conjuncture, need to be carefully distinguished from each other before we decide and act in the matter.

There is, for example, the ordinary personal-motivated violence of different kinds in our society, a most common occurrence, for so long as we have a money-and-profit dominated economy and society all forms of crime and violence which promise to pay will continue to be committed. Any effective response to this violence obviously, must begin by questioning this domination or, again, given the fact that this society is full of glaring injustices and iniquities, oppression and exploitation, it will always have its victims, frustrated and desperate men and women, ready to avenge themselves or their fellow victims, violently or otherwise. The need here is not to pass moral judgements or condemn their motives and actions, but to do whatever we possibly can to change the conditions which make such frustration and desperation, and the accompanying violence, inevitable.

Yet again, alongwith the normal violence, we have a great deal of specific anti-people violence in our society. There is the recurring violence among the people, on one issue or another, often generated, even actively promoted, by unscrupulous politics at the top. Communal violence is an obvious example. But we need to take particular notice of a more pervasive kind of private anti-people violence, which has finally arrived. The crisis of our poor possessive-market society, its manifold conflicts, its lumpen rapacity and crumbling structures of authority, with the people desperately struggling to survive, has given rise to a great deal of private violence of the rich and powerful against the people below—landlord armies, armed gangs or vigilante groups of the dominant classes, a rich variety of mafias, all sorts of 'goon squads', often linked with the police, politicians and businessmen and always available for hire, and so on.

This violence which given its overall class character is generally backed, condoned or connived at by the state, deserves to be condemned without reservation. But this private violence, or for that matter lawless violence of the state itself, may provoke counter-violence on the part of the people. The people may be compelled to resist and even retaliate. They may find it necessary to turn to violence in sheer self-defence, or in defence of their democratic right to organise and struggle peacefully. They may need to resort to violence to defend the gains of their past struggles or exercise of the rights they still have including the right to vote, and so on. Such private violence by or on behalf of the people is well-justified; it certainly cannot be treated or condemned in the usual manner.

Our society has also given rise to certain specific forms of private violence, armed protests or struggles by individuals and groups, which are, despite their differences of causation, character and possible futures, generally lumped together as 'terrorism' in the country, its foremost political problem today. It is not my concern to analyse this problem beyond the general observations I have already made. But one aspect of it does interest us here. We don't have to lump together the various historically specific expressions of this private violence to recognise that even as this 'terrorism' fights the Indian state, it is known to turn, to a greater to lesser degree, against the people also.

And this calls for a brief comment. In any armed protest, resistance or struggle, the quality of its politics, politics commanding the gun, is of decisive importance. If the quality of this politics is poor, the gun becomes increasingly more important, it tends to itself become the politics, just as state terrorism tends to do at the other end. In other words, if an armed resistance or struggle lacks a coherent liberationist ideology and programme, the requisite revolutionary theory and practice, which may help it gain the willing support of the people and mobilise them in a popular movement, it will, sooner rather than later, seek to use force to gain this support—really the people's acquiescence or compliance through fear and terror-hardened sensibilities. The policies and actions of the 'terrorists' become increasingly self-defeating, harming the very people whose cause they otherwise claim to espouse, in taking up arms against the state. Just as at the other end, seeking to gain their acquiescence or compliance the same way, state terrorism too harms the people, alienating them from 'India', it claims to be defending for them against the terrorists.

In this situation, dependence on foriegn aid, aids only the process of moral and political degeneration of the original armed protest or struggle. The consequences are the dead-end game of killing and getting killed, a vicious circle of competitive atrocities and reprisals, intermittent internecine warfare among the various groups and a brutalisation of everyday life of the common people, all of which provides an excellent cover to all sorts of anti-social elements, any and every kind of criminal activity. Maybe Punjab is very much on my mind, but the argument certainly has its general relevance.

Needless to add, terrorist violence against the people has no moral or political justification at all. It can only be condemned. Though, for obvious reasons, detailed knowledge and careful analysis is necessary before we pass judgement in each case. We need to know the truth and not its official version only.

In a society like ours which is *structurally* saturated with violence, with exploitation, oppression and inequality, there is always room for revolutionary violence. To reject such violence and uphold non-violence on principle has no justification, rational or moral, in the light of the historical experience of the struggles of the oppressed the world over. As the French philosopher, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, once put it,

> to teach non-violence is to strengthen established violence, that is to say, a system of production which makes misery and war inevitable.

Revolutionary violence aims at destroying this established violence and to create a new system of production and society in which 'misery and war' are no longer inevitable. It is a violence, as he put it, 'which transcends itself on the way to the human future'. Thus, for example, the problem that the 'Naxalites', as they are called, present our society is not one of private violence to be condemned, but of an exploitative and oppressive social order crying out for revolutionary change.

Revolutionary violence may indeed be criticised, even rejected, but not on abstract moral grounds. The grounds have to be specific such as a negative assessment about its 'appropriateness' in a given situation, a lack of 'proportionality' between means and ends, and so on. On the basis of historical experience, it is also possible to argue against the general efficacy and appropriateness of individual or group acts of revolutionary violence. Even when deemed necessary, one needs to beware of the dangerous possibility of getting sidetracked or lost in a vicious circle of violence and counter-violence.

It is thus absolutely imperative for those so involved to be constantly self-critical of their theory and practice in this regard, as elsewhere, in the interests of the revolutionary movement as a whole. It seems to me, however, that the real issue with revolutionary violence is not so much its rights or wrongs as the taking of sides in the ongoing class war between the people and their oppressors and exploiters.

Looming large over all these forms of private violence in our society is the violence that Indian state has come to represent today. The issue here is not its inherently violent nature *as a state*, or the violence implicit in the socio-economic structures this state normally defends, violently or otherwise. What needs to be noticed is its emergence as the single largest perpetrator of violence on the people today. Such is the explicit material expression of this violence in recent years that scholars and laymen alike have been compelled to speak of 'state terrorism' or 'the terrorist state' in contemporary India. There is the ever-growing draconian legislation and the ever-expanding apparatuses of repression and the ruthless use of both everywhere in this vast land of ours. The old, extended or new laws are there—ESMA, MISA, NSA, different Armed Forces Special Powers Acts, many kinds of Disturbances, Disturbed or Terrorist Affected Areas Acts, amendments to the Constitution and the Criminal Procedure Code, and, above all, the TADA, and so on—which provide for new structures of authority, new hierarchy of courts, new legal procedures, new ranges of offences, new and stiffer penalties, new detentions without trial and new and harsher powers for the police, para-military forces and the army. New restrictions have come to be imposed on the life and liberties of the people in violation of old and established constitutional safeguards and new authorisation provided for the lawlessness of the state, including extra-judicial, kidnappings and killings known as 'encounters'; and alongwith 'custodial deaths' even the pheno-

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menon of 'missing', long associated with the dictatorial regimes of Latin America, has arrived.

To execute these laws and this lawlessness alongwith the old we now have any number of new police and paramilitary formations, new security set-ups, armed wings, guards and protection groups and the rest, well-supported by the army on the one hand and the well-rewarded state or politician-sponsored terrorist groups on the other. The much touted 'financial crunch' notwithstanding, financing all this has been no problem at all. In large 'terrorist affected' parts of the country, it is a situation of massive power, without any checks or accountability, but with an irresistible temptation to confuse every expression of popular protest, dissent or even recalcitrance with terrorism and therefore meant to be handled with ruthless brutality. Unchecked power has its own logic; corruption rampant in the system has taken care of the rest. Whatever its problems, or problematic success in fighting 'terrorism', the state's terrorism has been remarkably successful in alienating the people and pushing them out of its own 'mainstream', leaving the 'national press' free to deceive itself and mislead the rest of the 'Indian nation'.

Only the nationalistically blind will fail to see that it is this mindless violence of the state, growing ever more mindless in its failure or impotence and the accompanying loss of legitimacy which spawns anew and fuels the terrorist violence in the country. The two in fact regularly feed, justify and legitimise each other—all the while adding to the misery and suffering of the common people everywhere.

XI

THIS digression on the subject of violence in our society, which is far from being exhaustive, should be sufficient to indicate the complexity of the issues involved which critics must show awareness of when they seek condemnation of violence qua violence or make their more specific but simplistic demands on democratic rights organisations. It is simply not true that these organisations condone, approve or support private violence or terrorism against the people. Only they don't see its condemnation as *their* task. Nor is it that they don't take note of its excesses or violations of people's rights, or have not found it necessary at times to even publicly criticise or condemn these. They have indeed done so, not on abstract moral grounds or to oblige the critics, but for good reasons of their own which include securing greater effectiveness for the democratic rights movement. But by self-definition, they have not seen this as their responsibility. They are committed to use their limited resources, first and above all, to defend the democratic rights of the people against their violation by the state.

Besides, if they are rather wary and seemingly non-cooperative with their critics in this matter, there is a consideration which they simply cannot afford to ignore. They are well aware that concerning the state's current assault on democratic rights, we are in a situation where those who know will not speak and the vast majority of our people are simply kept ignorant about the violations, even crimes being committed by the state, often in their name and their supposed interests. Given the power and reach of the communication media, public and private, at the disposal of the state, given its extraordinary ability to project its own point of view and to manipulate public opinion by selective use of information, and given the fact that you cannot accuse the state or the 'mainstream' private media of fair or balanced reporting where the democratic rights movement or for that matter any popular democratic movement is concerned, every concession made by the democratic rights organisations to their critics here is bound to be used in the time-tested onesided manner to further condone, justify and legitimise state terrorism. This would mean, in effect, a denial of the very purpose for which these organisations have come to be constituted. Their work will lose its meaning, and so will the courage, dedication and sacrifice of their activists.

The democratic rights organisations and their activists have indeed reason to be wary. They have a right to their own democratic decision in this matter. You cannot blame them if they do not see the 'condemnation' demanded of them as one of *their* concerns an invariable responsibility they must not evade. 'Law and Order' is not their business and they are not in the game to perform balancing acts, give evidence of their 'impartiality' or 'fairmindedness', or dish out even-handed judgements on violence in our society. Nor are they in search of certificates of good conduct or 'patriotism' from their critics or the powers that be. They may in fact regard it ridiculous, even shameful to jump on their bandwagon and join their chorus of righteous indignation against 'terrorism'.

They refuse to join this chorus not because they love violence or have a twisted moral sense which can no longer distinguish between right and wrong, nor because they would condone actions which every decent person ought to condemn. Their work over the years in Andhra Pradesh and elsewhere should make it abundantly clear that they don't need to make any apologies for their moral sense. And they know what decent behaviour is as well as most, and certainly a lot better than their critics or the other leaders of the anti-terrorist chorus—they owe no explanation to anyone here. They don't join this chorus simply because they are in the game, if not only, certainly primarily, to defend the democratic rights of the people against their violation by the state.

The way the critics still continue with their criticism and condemnation and even betray a strong compulsion to misrepresent the motives and intentions of the democratic rights organisations even when they are known to have condemned militant groups for their 'violation of human rights' or 'senseless killings', persuades me that there is more to the critics' umbrage, and one needs to look at *their* motives and intentions, at their game. Maybe what is involved here, implicitly or otherwise, are the more basic issues of ideology and politics on either side.

For example, apropos 'terrorism' in Kashmir, one of India's top-ranking journalists, in a centre-page article in *The Times of India*, has written of the 'utterly one-sided pronouncements of do-gooder groups' and charged them with the view that 'mass killings and kidnappings of the innocent by terrorist and secessionist gangs are perfectly allright'. This, we all know, is simply not true. No democratic rights organisation has ever subscribed to anything even remotely resembling this view. On the contrary, to give an example, with V.M. Tarkunde of the Coordination Committee on Kashmir and many others, they have, context permitting, more than once criticised and condemned such actions and urged the militants to stop them. Yet the critics persist with their charges—they are simply not satisfied. Obviously what really troubles them is not the lack of such criticism or condemnation. Obviously they are after something else or more.

It seems to me that what they are really asking for, of course in 'the interests of the nation', is an acceptance and endorsement of the state's terrorism in the Valley, the politics of this terrorism, in effect, the ruling class politics in Kashmir. I see no reason at all why the democratic rights organisations or their activists should be expected to so oblige these critics.

This is not to suggest that the democratic rights organisations are the vehicles of some other politics, as this term is commonly understood. If 'law and order' is not their business, 'politics' in this sense is not their business either. Racketeers abound in our country, they are everywhere. But there is no doubt that those genuinely attracted to the risky business of defence of democratic rights today are men and women of a high moral sense and idealism, full of deep concern for the people. Many, if not most, of them may naturally tend to sympathise with the Left of one shade or the other, they may have their interest in radical or revolutionary politics. To this they are fully entitled. But the democratic rights organisations or those of their activists who have this other interest or activity well know that even though the abuse of state power, including the state's terrorism, ultimately grows out of the essential, structural compulsions of the prevalent economy and politics, *other* organisations, *other* struggles of the people, are needed for a change in this situation, and that it is going to be a long haul. They know that the democratic rights organisations are not the vehicles of this other struggle.

But then this other struggle *is* on in our society, between the people and those who oppress and exploit them—however weak or fragmented it may be or beset with a thousand problems of theory and practice, politics and organisation. And no matter how the democratic rights organisations define or circumscribe their role, how scrupulously they stick to the self-imposed limits of their popular concerns or how responsibly they behave in pursuit of these concerns, their work yet remains a defence of the people's rights and places them firmly on the people's side of the barricades, if I may put it that way. It is and cannot but be also an entry, one among many, into this other struggle, and in this sense, more than only a defence of democratic rights.

Even if the democratic rights activist somehow fails to see this, his critics, generally more perceptive and class conscious in these matters, see and understand this very clearly. So do the state and its functionaries. Hence the hostility and harassment, the persistent persecution. For the ruling classes, their representatives or spokespersons, democratic rights activity is, in the final analysis, a dangerously subversive activity. It has to be questioned, criticised and condemned and as far as possible, suppressed.

The democratic rights organisations and their activists are, in their own way, standing by the struggling Indian people in these our troubled times, when so many others, from the intelligentsia and elsewhere, have deserted them—many of them deserting their people for 'the nation'! Such an understanding should make them rightfully more proud of their struggle in defence of democratic rights and, I am sure, it will make this struggle more effective also. ■

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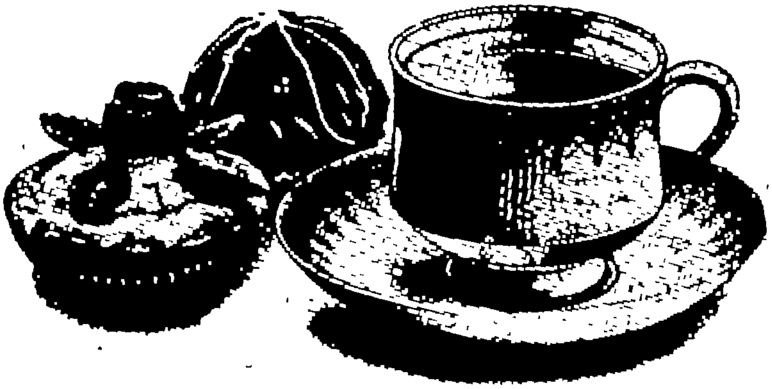

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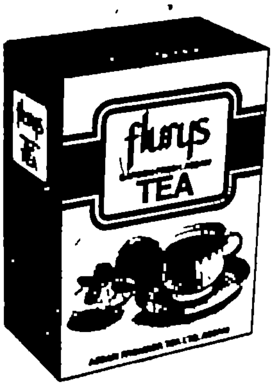

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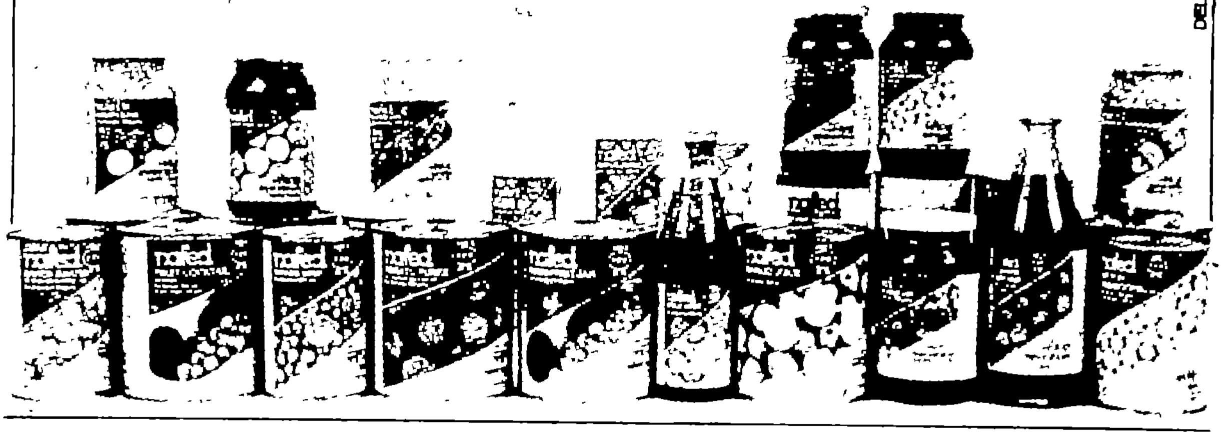

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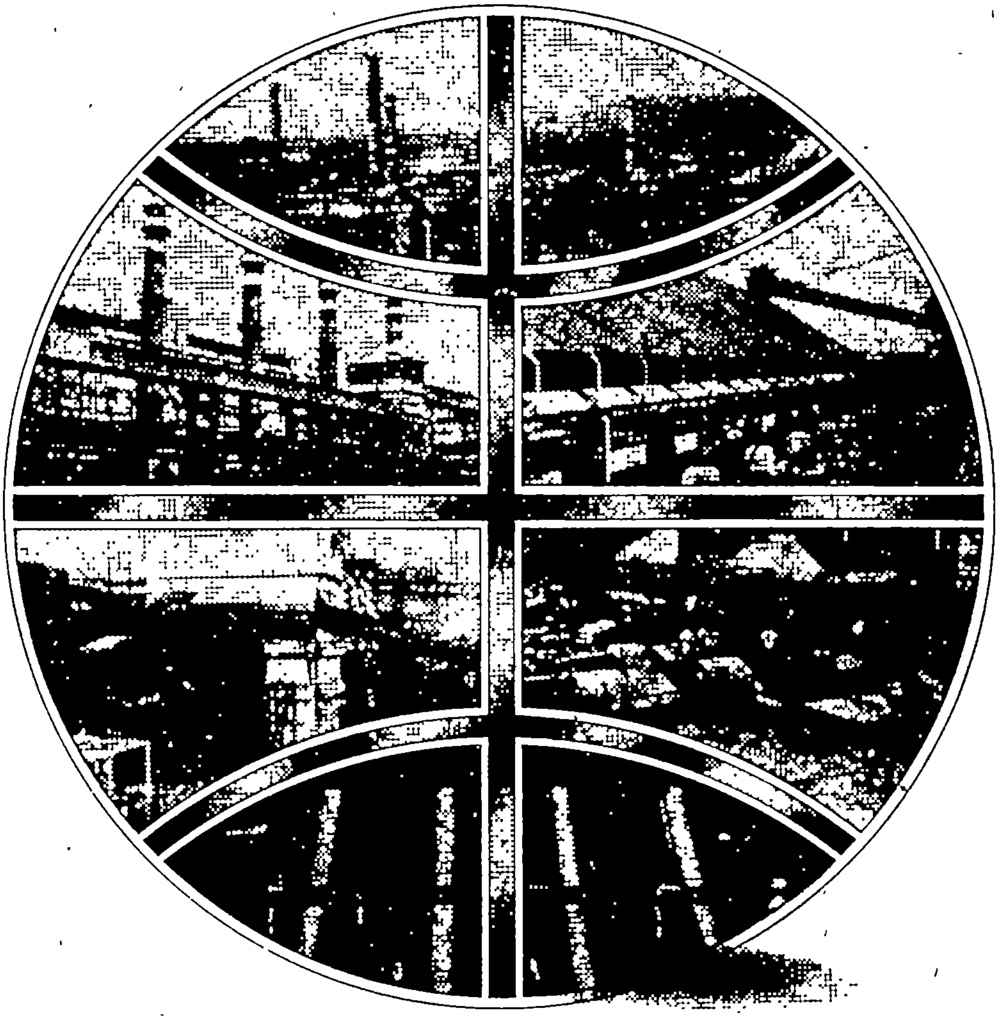

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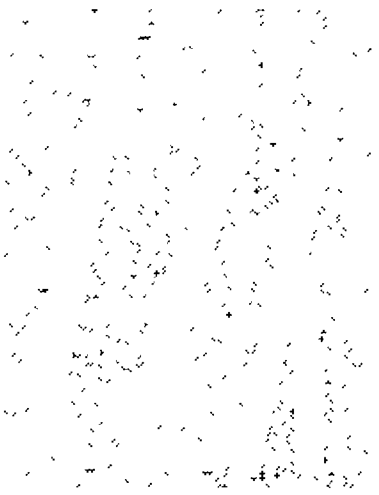

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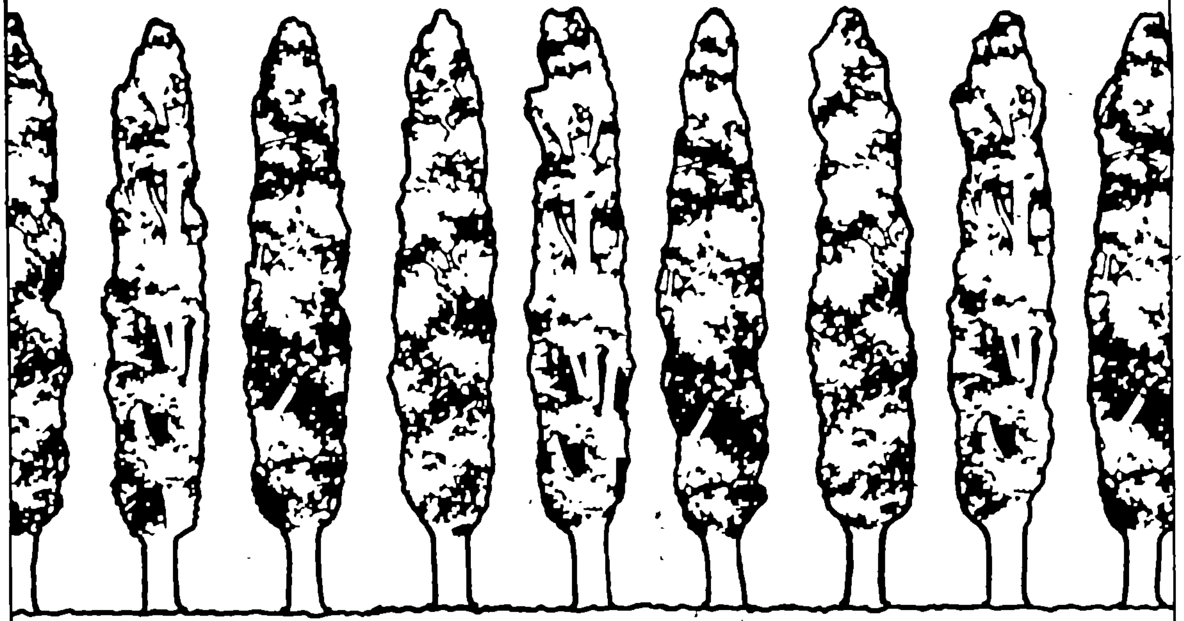

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PM in New York, Davos ● Dissecting Dunkel Draft

Mainstream

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POLITICAL NOTEBOOK

Centre on Trial

The *Punjab* elections have become highly crucial. On trial are the democratic credentials of the Central Government.

What has been the policy of the Centre with regard to Punjab? The Rajiv-Longowal Accord, announced with much fanfare in 1985, was not sought to be implemented due to political reasons. The last Chief Minister of Punjab, Surjit Singh Barnala, was unceremoniously dismissed only to enable the Congress-I to reap the dividend. Elections to the State Assembly, slated for May 1991, were cancelled to help the Congress-I: an unprecedented move on the part of the Central authorities.

Hence it is for the Congress-I Government at the Centre to prove its credibility before the people of Punjab.

However, far from doing so, the Central authorities are adopting measures that can only become counter-productive.

First, the leaders of those parties that are opposed to the elections were lathi-charged and beaten up while they were peacefully campaigning for poll boycott. Theirs was neither an unconstitutional move nor an illegal offence.

Secondly, the Union Home Minister has stated that steps would have to be taken to prevent those advocating poll boycott from holding rallies and thus coercing the electorate not to vote. Certainly any form of coercion is condemnable and would attract punitive measures. But a peaceful stir against the poll is something guaranteed in any democratic set-up.

In fact it is the Centre's actions which have exposed it to the charge of coercion. Instead of such coercive acts let the people themselves decide whether or not to exercise their franchise.

No doubt Punjab is plagued by secessionist terrorism which needs to be effectively countered. And in that context those who have stood for the Punjab elections deserve the highest praise of the entire nation as genuine crusaders for democracy. But the Centre's short-sighted steps neither promote democracy nor help the fight against the terrorist secessionists. Those are only adding grist to the militants' mill while further eroding the Centre's credibility among the Punjab populace.

It is necessary to urgently make amends. While adopting all possible measures to implement the Rajiv-Longowal Accord and transfer Chandigarh to Punjab as its natural capital, the Centre must reassure the people of Punjab that the elected government due to assume office after February 19 would not be summarily dismissed as was done in the case of Barnala.

The Centre is facing a severe test in the Punjab poll. If it is serious of winning the hearts and minds of the people of the State it must strike a new course departing from past practice.

February 6 S.C.

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A Fruitful Odyssey

SUMIT CHAKRAVARTTY

In his first major exposure abroad this year Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao has been able to effectively convey India's distinct positions on the various vital issues thrown up in the midst of the breathtaking historic changes the world is undergoing in this last decade of the twentieth century.

Both at the extraordinary summit of the 15-member UN Security Council at New York on January 31 and the annual international gathering of the captains of global business and industry at Davos in Switzerland on February 3, the Prime Minister provided adequate testimony of India's forthright positions in the altered politico-economic landscape following the final burial of the Cold War. At the same time he took the opportunity to voice the developing countries' serious misgivings and concerns amidst the growing hopes and aspirations accompanying the triumph of the democratic spirit over totalitarian tyranny in the Second World.

At New York Narasimha Rao unequivocally welcomed the recent "upsurge of democratic sentiment all over the world" and declared:

> We have been touched by the desire in diverse countries that the values of liberty, economic justice and the dignity of man should govern the conduct of world affairs These are trends of which our discussions must take cognisance.

In this context he did not fail to note that the Security Council and the UN body itself could play the role expected of them because the Council's permanent members "adopted a harmonious, cohesive and firm stance in dealing with the threats to the cherished values of man". He was not hesitant to greet the efficacy that the Council had acquired of late.

And yet, the Indian Premier did not shy away from projecting the grim realities of the present-day scene from the Third World perspective

> Lasting peace and security, necessarily require comparable levels of human happiness across the globe It is impossible to think of a United Nations functioning usefully or harmoniously while humankind continues to be riddled with ever-increasing disparities This is the single simple truth which this body has to take note of All else falls in place, although the overall task remains extremely complicated, even with the best will in the world

He emphasised the fact that the UN Charter needed to be safeguarded by the "collective will of the international community" and added:

> At every step the interpretation of the Charter as well as the actions by the Security Council must flow from that collective will and not the views or predilections of a few. A general consensus must always prevail. What is right and just must become transparent. It is as simple as that. Members of the Security Council, whether permanent or elected, should insist on this consensus, scrupulously avoiding the temptation to dictate for quick results. Besides, while prescribing norms and standards for national and international conduct, the Security Council must scrupulously accept those norms for itself.

The author covered the Prime Minister of India's visit to New York and Davos (January 30-February 4, 1992) on behalf of Mainstream.

Narasimha Rao spoke in the afternoon of January 31 following the speeches of the heads of state/government of several countries, including France, Russia, the US, China. He did not specifically mention President Bush's pronouncements at the international meet and yet to any lay observer it was evident that what he said ran counter to Bush's hectoring postures that became more than transparent in his use of such crude, undiplomatic phraseology, as "we must make clear to the world, and most important, to the people of Iraq, that no normalisation is possible so long as Saddam Hussain remains there, remains in power"; "we must resolutely deal with these renegade regimes, if necessary, by sanctions or stronger measures, to compel them to observe international standards of behaviour"; "I would just like to use this meeting today to call on Libya to heed the call of the Security Council of the United Nations" on the Lockerbie disaster.

In fact on the question of imposing sanctions on developing countries like Iraq, Narasimha Rao brought into focus the need to "act decisively and in time to alleviate human suffering in the country in question, once the primary purpose of imposing economic sanctions has been fulfilled".

◆

IT was on the question of human rights that Narasimha Rao adopted the most forthright stand. Reiterating his "profound respect for those who are crusading for the protection and preservation of human rights" and reasserting India's steadfast pursuance of cherished human values throughout history from Buddha to Ashoka, he did not mince words to underscore:

> We cannot countenance a situation where all human rights are reserved only for the practitioners of terrorism, while governments dealing with this menace are arraigned day and night on grounds of violation of human rights—real or imaginary, mostly the latter.

Calling for a clear-cut delineation of the "parameters that harmonise the defence of national integrity with respect for human rights", Narasimha Rao said:

> While the endeavour of the UN... is to gradually move towards creating uniform international norms for human rights, such norms should not be unilaterally defined and

> set up as absolute preconditions for interaction between states and societies in the political and economic spheres.

This was in complete variance with the common stand of the US, Britain and Russia at the meet. While Bush spoke of the universality of human rights transcending the borders of state, John Major, the British Premier who hosted the summit (in his capacity as the head of government of the country which presided over the Security Council for the month of Januray), pointed out that "human rights verification and free and fair elections" were now becoming essential components of UN peace-keeping operations as vital elements of peaceful settlement of conflicts. Echoing the same sentiment, Boris Yeltsin, the Russian head of state and star attraction at the gathering—who declared that his country regarded the US and the West "not as mere partners but rather as allies", and described this as "a basic prerequisite for a revolution in peaceful cooperation among progressive nations"—said questions of "human rights and freedoms in their entirety including political and civil rights and decent socio-economic and environmental living standards" were "not an internal matter of states". Thereafter he added:

> The Security Council is called upon to underscore the civilised world's collective responsibility for the protection of human freedom, honour and dignity.

India's stand on the issue with stress on the development aspect found support from such states as China and Zimbabwe. While agreeing that human rights should be universally accepted, Li Peng, the Chinese Premier, pointed out that "human rights cover many aspects,... not only civil and political rights, but also economic, social and cultural rights" and "as far as the large numbers of developing countries are concerned, the rights to independence, subsistence and development are of permanent importance". He said:

> In essence, the issue of human rights falls within the sovereignty of each country. A country's human rights situation should not be judged in total disregard of its history and national conditions. It is neither appropriate nor workable to demand that all countries measure upto the human rights criteria or models of one or a small number of countries.

China was ready to discuss the matter with other countries on an equal footing, he said, but asserted that "it is opposed to interference in the internal affairs of other countries using the human rights issue as an excuse" (At the same time Li Peng—while repeating the Beijing approach of "socialism with Chinese characteristics"—averred that the world was "moving in a direction of multipolarisation" from its original bipolar structure, thereby rejecting the unipolar global concept of many of the Indian Sinophiles steeped in dogmatic perceptions that China with its "one country two systems" has long discarded.)

In the absence of the Zimbabwe Premier, Dr Robert Mugabe due to a personal bereavement, Dr Nathan Shamuyarira, in a comprehensive and exhaustive speech that outlined the developing states' charter before the world body, welcomed the steps being currently taken to "dismantle the ugly face of apartheid" and said:

> Massive and deliberate violations of human rights or the existence of situations of oppression or repression can no longer be tolerated.

He was also aware that in the present era, the Security Council could be "called upon to deal more and more with conflicts and humanitarian solutions of a democratic nature that could pose threats to international peace and stability". Nevertheless, he counselled "great care" to see that "these domestic conflicts are not used as a pretext for the intervention of big powers in the legitimate domestic affairs of small states; or that human rights issues are not used for totally different purposes of destabilising other governments". He then expressed "apprehension about who will decide when to get the Security Council involved in an internal matter and in what manner", that is, "who will judge when a threshold is passed that calls for international action; who will decide what should be done, how it will be done and by whom".

Narasimha Rao in his speech urged the UN to "work towards a just and fair world economic order" and "encourage countries to move towards universal norms of human rights". Significantly, this view was shared by none other than Kichi Miyazawa, the Japanese Prime Minister, who spoke immediately after him. The favourable trend towards world peace, in Miyazawa's opinion, "will not endure unless the dividends of peace are shared by all, but especially by the peoples of the South who are beset with famine, poverty, disease and other hardships". Thus, he felt, the UN should engage "in serious efforts in addressing the North-South problems" and "extend appropriate assistance" to the "self-help efforts of developing countries". Such efforts, in turn, "will foster respect for human rights and the spread of democracy, values shared by people in all parts of the world", he added.

Interestingly, the divergences on this issue became so sharp at the meet that eventually the consensus statement read out by John Major did not carry any reference to human rights as Britain and the US with Yeltsin's Russia would have desired. There was just a reference to human rights verification becoming an integral part of the Council's peackeeping efforts in some conflict areas. In the statement the issue was covered in two paragraphs bereft of the postures of George Bush:

> The non-military sources of instability in the economic, social, humanitarian and ecological fields have become threats to peace and security. The UN membership as a whole, working through the appropriate bodies, needs to give the highest priority to the solution of these matters.

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INDEED try as they would, the US and its allies could not prevent the North-South issues from being raised at the Summit. India did not harp much on the theme perhaps in view of the time constraint. But in a brilliant wide-ranging speech that demonstrated France's distinct entity in Europe, quite independent of the US, Francois

Mitterand, the French President, called for the setting up of "regional funds for conversion to promote the transfer of research and military development to non-military production" for the benefit of the CIS constituents and the developing states as in the Middle East. Thereafter he spoke of the "new solidarity" with the really developing states through private and public investments, cheap credit and growth of international trade and with the least developed countries through active steps like the necessary control of primary commodities to get them involved in the world economy—all with the purpose of preventing the substitution of East-West confrontation by North-South conflict. It is in this context that his proposal for a world summit on social development—"to review our thinking on development itself and develop the human dimension of this matter"—merits special attention.

Also worthy of mention is the last sentence of John Major's consensus statement:

> They (the Council members) recognise that peace and prosperity are indivisible and that lasting peace and stability require effective international cooperation... for the eradication of poverty and promotion of a better life for all in larger freedom.

Narasimha Rao's distinct approach to nuclear non-proliferation came out in bold relief at the summit. Referring to the "possible loss of control over nuclear arsenals" in the CIS, he felt that the proliferation issue, having assumed a "qualitatively and frighteningly new dimension", had now become a global problem and not of a few potential nuclear weapon states.

> In this imponderable yet terrible scenario, technical fixes or regional arrangements can no longer suffice. The difficulties of monitoring and policing activities in a large number of states, several of them not even accurately identified at any given time, preclude effective results. (Here the Prime Minister departed from the prepared text to point to the futility of expecting the UN Secretary General to survey basements in search of bombs.)

Hence the "only logical route available to us", in his opinion, is to "pursue a global approach, based on a new international consensus on non-proliferation" which to be effective "must be universal, comprehensive and non-discriminatory and linked to the goal of complete nuclear disarmament". It is against this backdrop that he dwelt at length on the Indian Action Plan for Disarmament, placed by the late Rajiv Gandhi at the Third Special Session of the UN on Disarmament, as it contained all the key elements of a new global consensus on nuclear non-proliferation.

> The idea India put forward in its Action Plan, such as a universal pledge to abjure the use of nuclear weapons, conclude a comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and to evolve a new, universal and non-discriminatory approach to non-proliferation, acquire compelling relevance. It is only within the framework of such a consensus, and through no other means, that the Security Council can deal effectively with the threats to peace emanating from the proliferation of nuclear weapons in its current global dimension.... I would venture to suggest that even going beyond India's Action Plan, the target date for a nuclear weapon-free world should now be advanced (from 2010) to the end of the present century. It would be a hopeful note on which to enter the twentyfirst century.

This was a constructive reply to the US President's *insistence*, at his 25 minute meeting with Narasimha Rao the same morning, that India should join the proposed five power *discussions* (involving the US, Russia, China, Pakistan and India), as suggested by Islamabad and backed by Washington, for creating a nuclear free zone in South Asia. This firm reply was in full conformity with India's oft-repeated policy-perspective on the issue although it did not find reference in the final statement of John Major. The statement was significant and India accepted its overall spirit, Narasimha Rao said in his speech. "However, I find that the statement does not reflect one or two of India's crucial concerns," he ventured to add.

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COLLECTIVE security and preventive diplomacy found repeated references in the speeches of the participants as well as the final document. Arms control measures, notably the US and Russia's spectacular cuts in nuclear arsenals, were duly reflected at the summit in varied ways. Yeltsin's call for the creation of a "Global System for Protection of the World Community based on a reorientation of the US Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) to make use of high technologies developed in Russia's defence complex" was noteworthy but drew a lukewarm US response thereby demonstrating how the roles have been reversed since the Reykjavik Summit that had foundered on Gorbachev's rejection of a similar proposal from the side of Reagan. Mitterand's observation that "nothing is possible without the determination of states, and especially the major powers, to reject the law of the jungle, the might is right principle" was a clear indication of France's sharp demarcation from the US policies. His proposal that France was "ready to make available to the UN Secretary-General a contingent of 1000 men for peacekeeping operations, at any time and at 48 hours notice" did not find acceptance on account of the US-British opposition although Yeltsin openly welcomed the suggestion.

India's call for a "wider representation" in the Security Council in view of the trebling of the UN membership since its inception, and "if it is to ensure its moral sanction and political effectiveness" found positive response from Zimbabwe which felt an expanded and more representative Council would carry more weight". Interestingly, Japan too extended indirect endorsement of the move.

> Since the Security Council is at the centre of the UN efforts to maintain international peace and security, it is important to consider thoroughly ways to adjust its functions, composition and other aspects so as to make it more reflective of the realities of the new era. This is a process in which Japan is prepared to take an active part.

The summit meeting was convened not only to promote John Major's domestic political credibility so necessary

(Continued on page 32)

What Remains Unsaid About UNCED

VIBODH PARTHASARATHI

In the complex geo-politics of today, any analysis of socio-ecological issues cannot be carried out in isolation from the dynamics of the international economic system. However, in the hitherto process towards the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), scheduled to be in Brazil next summer, a multi-dimensional politico-economic approach as well as a synthesis of micro-level reality with the global perspective has been conspicuous by its absence. After the third Preparatory Committee (Prepcom) meeting of the UNCED held in Geneva in August, it is of utmost pertinence to spell out and re-articulate the UNCED process in close relationship with the economic challenges facing the South in the light of the multi-pronged efforts at recolonisation by the North.

As has been the case in most international forums, the agenda for the UNCED too has been undoubtedly set to protect interests of the North. While the agenda of the GATT had been blatantly moulded to further economic penetration by the North, this persistence of domination has been carried out at the UNCED in a much more subtle manner. To begin with, the UNCED documents seem to reflect an understanding of "the environmental crisis" which has been commonly associated with the notion of "deep ecology"—prevailing both in the North as well as among the respective elites in the South. This notion espouses the global threat pertaining to ozone layer depletion and global climatic changes, as the primary manifestation of this "crisis"—the biggest threats to "our common future", and thus the immediate need to "conserve" the living planet. The UNCED documents completely ignore regional and micro- level socio-ecological realities within the South such as the absence of drinking water, health hazards resultant of industrial pollution and degradation of forests and productive land.

This "crisis", in itself inarguably crucial to the collective survival of humankind and thereby the only one truly operating in global space, has been precipitated, as often reiterated, largely by factors whose roots lie deep in the very philosophy of free-market enterprise in the industrialised North. What is lacking, therefore, is not merely a multi-dimensional critique of these development models. At a more fundamental level, the UNCED documents lack, or rather have chosen to ignore, the fact that these very development models of the North have been, and continue to be, the primary inspiration for those encouraged and proliferated in majority of the South.

It is important to mention in this context that throughout the various Prepcoms the US has repeatedly asserted that solutions to the "environmental crisis" must be evolved from within the existing system of free-market enterprise. This not only implies a narrow economic solution to a complex, essentially political issue, but further the promotion of the path of development which the US has accepted—the gist of which is the myth of the dynamics of a market providing ecological sustainability as well as social equity. It is in the perpetuation of these socially inequitable and ecologically unsustainable economic models by the North to as to facilitate its hold over the global economy that the significance as well as the relationship between the GATT and the UNCED as multi-lateral forums must be understood.

The author, an environmental activist and freelance journalist, was recently in Europe and attended the third UNCED Prepcom at Geneva.

Throughout the three Prepcoms hitherto, the North has carefully chosen to dodge any discussion on, firstly, the "how" of the environment of the environmental crisis—both at the macro level on the planet, and the micro level within the Third World. Secondly, while discussing development, rather underdevelopment, in the South, it has also avoided the "why" pertaining to poverty in the South. That these two issues were conspicuous by their absence clearly indicates efforts by the North to "hijack" the UNCED process. The pronouncement of the "conspiratheory" in this particular context is simply due to the abundance of evidence pertaining to the precipitation of this dual crisis and the resultant increase of poverty, which unquestionably points towards overconsumption and waste in the North, as well as the unfair global trading system in the post-colonial period with the South respectively, as the villain of the piece.

Media rhetorics of its leaders notwithstanding, right from the agenda setting stage, the North seems to be following the age-old dictum vis-a-vis the South—"do as I say, don't do as I do". The case of the so-called Biodiversity Convention is a prime example of double standards by the North at the Prepcoms hitherto. The draft Biodiversity Convention, as conceived of by the North, proposes natural resources to be looked upon as global commons conserved and used for the benefit of humankind. At one level, this Convention can be viewed as a sincere effort on paper by the North to achieve a Gandhian harmony with Nature. However, at the same time, the US-led North at Geneva was neither willing to accept the (then unsigned) Law of the Oceans (which stands for an equitable and sustainable use of marine resources by all countries) nor extending the agreement banning the commercial exploitation of Antartica (then shortly to be declared as a global reserve).

However, it is the GATTian perspective of the proposed Convention which has important implications as far as the economic perspective of the South is concerned. Needless to mention, the GATT is one of the most crucial multilateral forums for the South as it is an important instrument of neo-colonialism by the North today. While the collective North at the Uruguay Rounds has repeatedly asked the South to agree on Biodiversity (especially in tropical eco-systems) being a common heritage, yet it has itself been adamant on "privatising biodiversity" wherever it suits their interests.

Privatising biodiversity essentially has two components: the techno-scientific process of isolating genes from a plant to preserve them or produce new plant species through genetical engineering; and the politico-legal process of privatising the bio-technology involved in the primary process by patenting it. Therefore, if biodiversity is privatised then all access to the so-called global commons is restricted by regional, national or local sovereignty. In such a situation, enterprises wishing to develop bio-technology will have to commercially purchase biodiversity available within the geographical domain of these political sovereignties.

On the other hand, if biodiversity is truly looked upon as a common resource, then it is only logical that bio-technology be equally a common resource—the financial benefits accruing from it belonging to the community. Although this has been the stand of the South at the Prepcoms, this is exactly what the North, primarily the US, wants to avoid at all costs. Consequently, the North has a peculiar stand—while biodiversity is a common resource, biotechnology is privatised, a private property. This peculiarity is rather simple to explain if the economic perspective is spelt out. The North needs access to raw materials all over the planet, namely, floural resources, especially those located in the tropical belts. Not ecological but purely economic motive in declaring biodiversity as global commons as only after access are they in a position to benefit from millions invested in R&D on biotechnology through returns from patents. Thus, hypothetically if the Biodiversity Convention comes into practice at the UNCED and the existing Intellectual Property Rights rules at the GATT are at best retained, the resultant common access as well as privatisation of biodiversity will not only result in gigantic financial gains for corporate and multinational enterprises, but also political control in the hands of these institutions pertaining to the proliferation of the synthesised products.

Attention must be drawn to how the North has been able to rather cleverly keep away from the UNCED the equally important, if not more so, process of North-South commerce—the primary regulator of the latter in our times being the GATT. At the UNCED, the North is quick to point out that trade and finance have nothing to do with "ecological" issues these being discussed at the Earth Summit. However, at the bilateral level and in forums such as the GATT, the North has consistently played a different tune. One may recall that countries from the North while disbursing the so-called development aid at the bilateral level have been trying to ensure that South governments bring about "structural" changes in their domestic economic system as a quid pro quo. Similarly, the track record of international organisations such as the World Bank and the IMF, effective puppets of the North, also brings to light a definite practice of "structural changes" as a pre-condition for aid, as is being witnessed in this country today. The deliberations of the GATT so far only reinforce the belief that the North is gearing towards extending such practices throughout the global space.

Therefore, it is evident that sooner rather than later the North will impose the same conditionalities in relation to the Earth Summit. Although their delegations have hitherto made no such statement publicly, there are indications that the North together with international financial institutions are working towards something along these lines to be presented at Rio, while discussing "funding potential" as a follow-up of the UNCED. As a corollary, individual countries from the North are bound to link the recipient countries signing on the dotted line of the principle conventions at the UNCED, to the flow of aid at the bilateral level.

That armtwisting by the North at the bilateral as well as multilateral level, in order to force the South to concede to its agenda at the GATT, is by now too well documented to be called an illusion. What is also being gradually discovered is that much is the same with the modus operandi of the North in the case of the UNCED. What seems to be ignored is that gigantic amounts of money as spin-offs of the entire UNCED process, the Earth Summit and after, will itself be used as a lever to force countries of the South to give in on issues it has been holding firm at the GATT—in the case of India it is the TRIPS and TRIMS that will bolster economic interests of the North. Those who doubt this argument or consider it to be an overstatement of one's case, need to analyse the structure of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) born during the countdown to Rio.

Created at the initiative of some industrialised countries, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) is a three-year pilot programme to facilitate the disbursement of loans or grants to the South to encourage projects relating to protection of global ecology. It is pertinent to note that though aid is on paper for the South, yet in practice it will benefit the North more as it is to be channelled for the Protection of the global ecology. Though the GEF fund is to be administered jointly by the UNEP, the UNDP and the World Bank, there is no doubt as to who would be running the show. Given the track record of the World Bank in funding environmental disasters and extending the tentacles of international debt in the South, there is substantial reason behind the anxiety of the South that environmentally disastrous aid packages will emanate from the GEF. Thus, such neo-colonial international organisations dominated by the North which are very much a part of the problem being discussed at the Prepcoms, can neither be catalysts for an alternative approach nor universally accepted forums to facilitate whatever, if at all, comes out of the UNCED.

As the final phase towards the Earth Summit at Rio unfolds, it is becoming increasingly clear that the core of issues at the Prepcoms, if reflecting a true concern at the UNCED, have possible solutions outside the sphere of the conventional approach towards environmentalism. What needs to be re-emphasised is that any attempt towards "saving the planet" will be a mere illusion if not addressed in relation to the mechanisms of global commerce being renegotiated in forums such as the GATT. Unless a democratic international economic and commercial order is established, all efforts at achieving social equity and ecological sustainability through the UNCED are doomed to fail. ■

(January 31)

Third World Approach to Modernisation

M.M. THOMAS

Modernisation is a global process which has transformed the pattern of living of people throughout the world.

The forces making for modernisation may be covered under three revolutions. *First,* the revolution in science and science-based technology. Material technology produced the industrial revolution and increased agricultural and industrial productivity and has moved poverty from the realm of inevitable fate to the realm of moral responsibility. Military technology has changed the character of war and made it highly destructive. Social technology has developed the human capacity for engineering with social forces, planning for social change and bureaucratic administration and management. This has enhanced the functions and powers of state in society and produced the welfare state. Mass communication technology has eliminated distances so that the world is fast becoming a global village. Life-sciences and technology control disease and death making control of birth necessary and possible; and genetic engineering has opened possibilities of deciding what kind of humans should populate the earth. And psychological techniques are able to control the minds and spirits of people in propaganda and advertisement as well as education for character.

Secondly, accompanying the technological revolution is the concept of human rights. The individual awakened to the rights of individuality emerges from group domination to assert the right to follow one's own reason and conscience. And communities hitherto submerged and suppressed become awake to their self-identity and its right to self-determination as well as to participation in decision-making processes which affect their lives. So one may read modern history as a series of social revolts for justice—the French Revolution with its slogans of liberty, equality and fraternity leading to democratisation of state; the revolt of industrial workers for trade union rights, better working conditions and welfare states; the social democratic and Soviet Communist Revolutions, the Asia-African nationalist revolts leading to decolonisation followed by the struggle of the poorer societies for greater share in technological power, and of the non-White peoples for racial justice.

Dr Thomas, Governor of Nagaland, is a social thinker, author and theologian of distinction.

Thirdly, accompanying the technological revolution and social revolts for justice, there takes place a conscious process of secularisation through which religious authorities and institutions are forced to give up their traditional control of state and society and to accept the plurality of religions and ideologies within the framework of a secular state and a growing secular society dependent on rational discourse to understand and pursue what constitutes the common good.

These three forces—technology, human rights and secularisation—have been operating largely within the framework of the world-view of what has been called Secular Humanism, that is, of the idea of a self-redemptive history, which provided the philosophy of modernisation. It was expressed in the optimistic doctrine of inevitable evolutionary progress or of inevitable dialectical progress; and when that optimism broke down, it was replaced by secular pragmatism—or nihilism.

I have surveyed the forces and philosophy of the modernisation process covering a few centuries to show that we still operate within the process and that it has both creative and destructive potentialities inherent in them. And from here, one may examine the manner in which the process found expression in three separate worlds.

The First World of Democratic Capitalism centred in the West, but actually no more a geographical area but truly transnational including Japan, and elite groups in all nations—which has already acquired dominance over the process worldwide. The Second World with its centre in Eastern Europe, was following an alternative path of command economy and one-party state to relate technology, justice and secularism. This world of communism was making its impact within the global process for several decades and which of course now lie in ruins, because the system became a fetter on production and suppressed the freedom of the individual in the name of social justice.

The Third World consists of the former victims of Western colonialism—Asia, Africa and Latin American—who even after political independence have not found their path of effective participation in the global process or their path within the nation of relating technological development, human rights and religious pluralism, to attack the massive poverty in their midst or to respond to do justice to the awakening of the weaker sections of their societies to their rights to equal social-cultural status with others and to determine their own self-identity. Here again, the Third World does not denote geographical regions but as in the Association of Third World Theologians a transnational area of peoples who see themselves placed in the exploited periphery of the power centres of the global process of modernisation.

My concern in this paper is to indicate briefly some of the current issues in the approach of the Third World peoples to Modernisation.

The first problem is to find space and support in the global process of modernisation for the Third World's own independent experiments of relating technical development, human rights and religious pluralism.

The Third World societies, of course, cannot isolate themselves from the global process but must relate themselves to the global forces as they exist. But the question is, can the Third World countries do so with freedom to develop without losing their priorities of liquidation of mass poverty and of other welfare objectives and preserving the democratic framework. As it is, there is no international order which will give the Third World countries the space and support to their own independent paths.

Of course, there was a time when the Third World could remain non-aligned between the Big Powers and dominant ideological systems and get some independent space. But with the breakdown of Eastern European socialism and the disappearance of the Soviet Union as a Big Power, that space has vanished. And with Eastern Europe moving fast towards capitalism and with Reaganism and Thatcherism dismantling the state welfare measures which have existed for decades, the idea of state intervention in economic and social processes of modernisation on behalf of the poor and the marginalised has globally suffered a serious setback. The world has become unipolar in terms of both ideology and power. This is to be regretted because, as the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Runcie, told the European Parliament in November 1989 that while communism has failed, capitalism has not shown its capacity to liquidate mass poverty in the world, to eliminate the threats of war or to deal tenderly with our only earth. As Leonard Hoff the Latin American liberation theologian has said: "The truth of capitalist exploitation is proved by the breakdown of the social fabric in the rich nations and the shattered lives of workers and those left behind in our societies on the periphery. The collapse of authoritarian socialism does not pardon the sins and inherent perversity of capitalism which must be constantly condemned and especially now when it is feeling euphoric and triumphant." ("Liberation Theology and Collapse of Socialism" in *Youth of India*, National YMCA, Summer 1991.)

In fact, many scholars like Nicholas Walterstoff and C.T. Kurien who have taken what is called a systemic approach to interpret mass poverty in the Third World are saying that poverty and affluence belong to one system, and that under capitalism, the process of creating wealth also creates poverty and unemployment. Global underdevelopment has to be explained by taking note of the adverse impact of the highly developed areas on the undeveloped. And within the nation, affluence for the ten per cent and life under poverty-line for the fifty per cent are the products of the same process. If this is so, we have to find an alternative path towards modernisation which while producing wealth and economic growth does not inevitably create increased poverty. The formulation of an alternative path for the Third World is indeed the second current issue in the Third World modernisation.

I have no regrets that Stalinist communism with its one-party political totalitarianism and a command economy which destroyed all economic initiative from the bottom disintegrated by its own inner contradictions. No doubt, it had its roots in the idea of one-party proletarian dictatorship of Leninism and the vagueness of Marx's own idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Elsewhere I have made the point that the roots of the inhumanity of Stalinism can be traced to the Enlightenment Humanism which Marx shared with most of the nineteenth century secular democratic intellectuals, in which the transcendent spiritual dimension of the human person was denied paving the way to dissolving the transcendent ground of human dignity in an ensemble of social functions and relations.

Even so, we need not deny the validity of Marx's humanism with its interpretation of the social sources of self-alienation of human beings in a class society. And in any case Marx had predicted that no social system which became a fetter on production could survive in history; and Stalinism fell as it had become such a fetter.

The point I am making is that the disintegration of Stalinist communism cannot be the end of socialism. If an alternative to world capitalism is needed to promote social justice, a new form of socialism has to emerge in the Third World which now of course may be defined to include Eastern Europe as well. In fact, much of the socialism canvassed in the Third World in the past has been anti-Stalinist from the very beginning as in Jayaprakash and Lohia in India; and their development in the light of lessons, about incentives for production and role of market, learned from the breakdown of the communist experiment in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, should help the emergence of a new form of socialism which takes the Third World priorities of social justice seriously. Again, to quote Leonard Hoff, socialist ideals "will find their place where they naturally belong, in the poor and oppressed nations of the Third and Fourth Worlds. The lesson of History must be learned: the society which it aims to build must be a society appropriate to the multi-faceted nature of human beings, and their social and transcendant dimensions."

In developing the New Socialism, the Third World has to go beyong the classical Capitalist-Socialist concept of what has been called the Economic Man, and take seriously the awakening of Dalits, Tribals, Women, Cultural Minorities and other communities to their separate self-identity and corresponding rights in the body politic—not as superstructural reflections of class-reality as Marxism tends to interpret, but as independent social realities themselves. It must also give adequate attention to the question of preserving the bio-eco environment for life on earth.

The Welsh Marxist, Raymond Williams, remembering the socially well-knit community in which he grew up, strongly argues that the weakness of much of the socialist movement arose from its ignoring "the various forms of social bonding—family, neighbourhood, ethnic group, etc. in its attempt to base everything on class consciousness which underlies the individualism of capitalist society." Bastion Wielenga in his comment on it ("the Changing Face of Socialism and its Relevance to the Churches" in *Christian-Marxist Dialogue* Spring 1991), adds, that human beings "live and experience themselves as social beings, as persons-in-community, in various forms of daily social life; such forms are vital and crucial for the satisfaction of basic social needs of the human person, but can no more be perceived by the atomised individual in capitalist society or uniformed member of a bureaucratic society. Instead, they get hooked up on substitute desires.. This applies not only to social needs but also to ecological needs. We need viable eco-systems in order to survive. We need patterns of production and consumption which can be sustained for the generations to come. Adivasis, women and peasants, living in direct interaction with Nature feel and perceive these needs existentially and act on it.

Fourthly, all current issues of the Third World approach to modernisation I have mentioned, speak for the relevance of the Gandhian critique of large-scale technology as an inherent source of alienation, dehumanisation and violence. Any new pattern of modernisation needs to develop not only as an ideological alternative to capitalism and communism but also an alternative technology appropriate to a human mode of modernisation. The Boston MIT Conference of Technicians on the Future of Humanity in a Technological Age held in 1979 under the auspices of the World Council of Churches said that the New Technology both in its scale and character must be "appropriate":

- to tackle the twin problems of poverty and unemployment simultaneously by the production of goods for mass consumption by the masses themselves—which means it should be labour-intensive;
- to sustain human life within proper natural environment which means it should not be too exploitative of non-renewable natural resources and not pollute the environment;
- to enable people's participation in decision-making processes of economic life affecting their welfare—which means, it should be small-scale, making direct democracy possible to the utmost;
- to enable industrialisation of poorer societies without too much capital—which means it should be made largely out of indigenous resources with indigenous creativity.

It seems to me that all these call for a philosophy of modernisation which goes beyond the materialistic world-view and respects the organic and spiritual dimensions of human community life. Actually all religions and cultural traditions of the Third World are quite sensitive to these dimensions through their reverence for Nature and concern for the primary communities like the family; and therefore any emerging new socialism needs to assimilate some of the traditional spirit and values in their renewed form. This will also help to give modernisation indigenous cultural roots, without which it often brings demoralisation. ■

Dunkel Draft Subverts Sovereignty

CALL FOR NATIONAL DEBATE

Three distinguished specialists in international economic relations, Muchkund Dubey, former Foreign Secretary; Surendra J. Patel, former Director of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD); and Deepak Nayyar, former Economic Advisor to the Ministry of Finance and now Professor in Jawaharlal Nehru University, have come out sharply warning against the Dunkel proposals before GATT. The following is the text of their statement. —Editor

Mr Arthur Dunkel, the Director General of GATT, in presenting a Draft Final Act on the Uruguay Round of Negotiations in GATT has given India the option of either acceding to the whole document or moving out of the international trading system altogether.

The Dunkel Document militates against India's interests in several ways. Its acceptance will result in curbing our economic sovereignty. It will blatantly interfere with our macro and microeconomic decision-making and frustrate the pursuit of our development priorities.

The proposed Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) goes against all major elements of the Indian Patent Act (1970) which has been regarded all over the world as a model. The 1970 Patent Act continues to reflect a broad national consensus. The acceptance of the TRIPS agreement will require major changes in the Act. These changes should not be acceptable to Parliament.

The text on Trade-Related Aspects of Investment Measures (TRIMS) will oblige us to treat foreign investors on a par with domestic companies. India's compliance with the Dunkel Text will seriously impede our self-reliant development and accentuate our balance-of-payments problem.

The Dunkel Draft of a General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) will oblige us to provide expanding and unrestricted space in our economy for the services, products and capital of foreign multinational companies. Once we include any service sector in the Schedule to the Agreement we will no longer be able to limit the inflow of equity capital and other imports for the foreign service industry.

The Dunkel proposals will undermine our programmes for agricultural development. Price support schemes, subsidies on inputs like water, power, fertilisers, pesticides and credits, organisation of buffer-stock build-up and public distribution system will have to be scrapped. The patenting of seeds, plants and biogenetic substances will harm our agricultural growth.

By far the most pernicious provision in the Dunkel Document is the establishment of a Multinational Trade Organisation (MTO) which will, in collaboration with the IMF and the World Bank review our trade policies, it will function on the basis of cross-retaliation and cross-sanctions. The GATT will be converted into yet another instrument for enforcing the IMF and World Bank conditionalities. The Dunkel Draft also provides for collaboration with the IMF and World Bank to promote, monitor and enforce a market-oriented growth strategy. The trinity will undermine our sovereignty. It will externalise the decision-making process for our national development. This will thus pave the way for our accepting the hegemony of the developed countries.

And what shall we get in return for the draconian restrictions that the Dunkel Draft imposes on our economic sovereignty? The answer is: absolutely nothing. In GATS, there is hardly a mention of the services in which we are competitive, that is, consultancy and labour services. In textiles, there will be only marginal liberalisation during most of the transitional period. The postponement of liberalisation till the end renders the entire package on Textiles and Clothing wholly unacceptable.

The way the Government of India will react to the Dunkel Document may well determine our very capacity for independent decision-making and action in economic matters and the very character of our international economic relations.

We, therefore, urge the government to refuse to accept the Document on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. The government should identify the points in the document which we cannot accept as they are. It should insist upon our right as a sovereign state and as a member of the international community to renegotiate these points. In the meantime, we call for a national debate on the entire issue, both in Parliament and outside. ■

Reform of GATT: Dunkel Proposals

ARUN GHOSH

The Director General of GATT, Arthur Dunkel, has prepared a revised draft treaty concerning the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the main features of which are very briefly summarised below:

(1) For the first time, the subject of Intellectual Property Rights (relating in the main to Patent Rights)—which had in the past been the concern of the world Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO)—is now to be incorporated as a separate agreement among members of the GATT, in respect of which complaints regarding violation and consequent damage) are to be considered within the Multilateral Trade Organisation (MTO) purposed to be set up to oversee the operations of GATT. The inclusion of property rights within the forum of the MTO is to be achieved by a separate treaty on Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs).

(2) Also included in GATT are Trade Related Investment Matters (TRIMs), the provisions of which give to foreign investors the same rights in the matter of investment as nationals in every member country. This implies complete exclusion of provisions like "phased manufacturing programme" seeking to increase the indigenous content in manufacture; no restrictions in regard to the import of raw materials and components; no ceiling on the extent of foreign investment; and no provision in regard to mandatory export of part of the output.

(3) There is to be a new agreement in regard to trade in services (GATS)—purporting to bring within the ambit of the MTO all services such as banking, insurance, shipping, etc.

(4) Certain new provisions in GATT, in regard to trade in agricultural products as well as domestic policies regarding agriculture, have been introduced.

(5) The Dunkel proposals incorporate significant dilution of exemptions and safeguards so far allowed to developing countries on balance of payment grounds, under the present Article XVIII of the existing GATT.

(6) An all-embracing facility of "cross retaliation", in case of damage, has been incorporated, thus allowing a country claiming violation of, say, patent rights by another country to discriminate against the latter in the matter of commodity trade.

(7) Deletion of the provision for "compulsory licensing" where a patent-holder does not want to manufacture an item in a country (this provision being under TRIPs), and treatment of import at par with domestic manufacture, for purposes of definition of the working of a patent (again, under TRIPs). These are significant new features of TRIPs as compared to existing facilities.

(8) Finally, the burden of proof in the case of any complaint would hereafter fall on the 'defendant' not on the 'complainant'.

The author is a former Member of the Planning Commission. This is the note he placed before the Cabinet Sub-Committee collecting different viewpoints on the Dunkel Proposals (January 1992).

This very brief summary indicates the most vital provisions of the Dunkel proposals which are likely to affect all developing countries generally and India in particular. Though a certain "transition period" is allowed, it is noteworthy that the transition period is shorter in most cases than even the phasing out of the Multi-Fibre Arrangement (MFA) under which the USA imposes strict quotas for the import of garments. For example, only some 50 per cent liberalisation is to be achieved in respect of MFA by the year 2002, in a phased manner, and eliminated only after 2003. Also, GATT recognises economic unions (like EEC) which can formulate their own rules in regard to trade within the "group" and trade with other countries.

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THE first point of the note about the Dunkel proposals is that the GATT now goes well beyond the area of international trade. The Dunkel proposals seek to extend the coverage of GATT to areas which are essentially part of domestic policy. For example, subsidy on agricultural supplies to any part of the population can now be given only on grounds of providing "nutrition" to certain target groups of the population. Subsidies on agricultural inputs are barred. Government purchases of agricultural products are to be made only at market prices; and subsidies on their sale are not to exceed 10 per cent.

Under TRIPs, even microbiological organisms and processes are patentable, which means that even hybrid seeds would become patentable, and cannot hereafter be replicated without adequate compensation to the patent-holder. Further, the existing provision regarding "compulsory licensing" of a patent in respect of which there is no production in the country which under the Indian Patent Act has to be compulsorily sub-licensed—subject to a maximum payment of 4 per cent of the value of output as compensation—is to be given up, implying enforced recourse to imports.

In like manner, the entire area of TRIMs involves an intrusion into domestic policy, insofar as this provision has implications for the pattern of investment that a country may wish to pursue, as also the types of technology that a country may wish to promote. There can hereafter be no regulation of technology import or import restriction of any kind in the interest of development.

The most problematic provisions of the Dunkel Proposals are (i) that the "burden of proof" in respect of complaint of damage will be on the defendant, and not the complainant; (ii) there is serious dilution of Article XVIII of GATT, in particular. The proposal now is that before any quantitative restrictions are imposed, import tariffs would first be tried and only if such tariffs prove to be inadequate, can the concerned country even think of imposing quantitative restrictions, in regard to which it would inform all other member countries and seek approval of MTO before imposing any such quantitative restriction; (iii) the provision in regard to "cross retaliation", which in a way arms all countries with the powers currently exercised by the USA under Super 301/Special 301; (iv) the serious inroads into the area of domestic policy through TRIMs and GATS; and (v) the extension of patentability even to microbiological organisms and processes without safeguards like "compulsory licensing" available to the Indian producers under Indian laws today.

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THE Dunkel proposals thus clearly set aside part 4 of the Existing GATT document which deals with issues concerning trade and development, the latter being a matter of over-riding concern. The GATT was initially created to pursue the objective of free trade in the interest of development. Hereafter, the GATT—and its operating mechanism, MTO—would really be concerned only with the problem of "market access" for developed countries. The objective is no longer free trade as an instrument for promoting growth. Dunkel has himself stated as much; he has clearly indicated that the objective of the reform of GATT is to increase market access. Obviously this is a recognition of the objective reality of "regional groups"; GATT which has always been a "rich man's club" will now become an active instrument for ensuring unequal trade between the developed and developing countries. The various regional groups can shut the door to outsiders and discuss the issue of "market access" on a reciprocal basis. The developing countries are, however, to be forced to provide for greater market access to all the developed countries.

The issue of the "burden of proof" (in the event of a complaint) falling on the defendant is a matter of serious concern. The Indian Legal System is based on the accused being presumed to be not guilty until so proven by the prosecution. Under the new GATT procedure, a complaint regarding "damage" has to be refuted by the defendant. It will no longer be necessary for the complainant to prove that damage has been inflicted; and even while discussions are on, "cross-retaliation" can take place. In fact, this provision regarding "burden of proof" goes against the very basis of the Indian legal framework.

Brief reference has been made to serious dilution of Article XVIII of GATT. More importantly, the Dunkel proposals make TRIPs and GATS separate agreements, without any reference to safeguards or exemptions under Article XVIII of GATT specifically written into these documents. And yet, "cross retaliation" even in respect of these areas is possible through MTO. That is, a complaint regarding GATS will allow a country (with the complaint) to restrict imports from the country against which the complaint is made. This is in effect a replication of the US Super and Special 301 in regard to all developed countries. The composition of MTO is obviously heavily weighted in favour of the developed countries. This appears to be a clever ploy to deny the developing countries even the limited (and now diluted) safeguards under Article XVIII of GATT, provided in the Dunkel Draft.

The provision in respect of "cross retaliation" is thus the most ominous feature of the Dunkel proposals.

The effect of the provisions on agriculture—on which the general impression created is that they will favour Indian Exports—will be to: (a) restrict Indian agricultural growth through restraint on even indigenous research on plant genetics—where, say, patents are filed in regard to microbiological processes—and inhibiting even the production of new seed varieties through these processes; total surrender of sovereignty in regard to the public distribution system; and elimination of all subsidies on agricultural inputs; and, most importantly, compulsory import of three per cent of our consumption of foodgrains, if international prices are lower—as part of the "market access" formula—which would imply an import of some five million tonnes of wheat and rice annually.

The effect of GATS and TRIMs would be to deny to the Indian Government sovereignty in regard to any development policy, for now there can be no independent investment policy other than that dictated by the global market system. And yet, while we lose control over investment through TRIMs and control over monetary and financial policy through GATS, the developed countries can continue to have a protective umbrella through, for example, the MFA, and over-all protection exercised by economic groups like the EEC.

The above is merely a very brief summary of the implications of the Dunkel proposals, which are currently under the consideration of the Government of India. ■

Critique of Dunkel Proposals

The National Working Group on Patent Laws submitted a memorandum to the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Dunkel's Report on Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations in New Delhi which was dated January 26, 1992. Here is the text of the Memorandum. The Chairman of the Group is Dr Nitya Nand; its Co-Chairman is Dr Surendra J. Patel, and its Convenor is B.K. Keayla.

—Editor

1. RESUMÉ ON ACTIVITIES OF NATIONAL WORKING GROUP

1.1. Our Group was constituted in August 1988, in response to the aggressive moves by foreign interests demanding substantial changes in the Indian Patents Act (1970). A high-powered official delegation of the US Administration visited India in July 1988. At the end of its meetings with senior officials and Ministers, this delegation held a Press Conference where they indicated that the government was favourably inclined to amend the Indian Patents Act to meet the demands of the USA. Further, it became evident from the Press Statement issued by the government on October 5, 1988 on the "Gandhi-Reagan Science and Technology Initiative Extension" that India and the United States had agreed "to consider the question of providing for protection and allocation on mutually agreeable basis of any intellectual property rights arising out of the STI programme". A joint Seminar of FICCI, WIPO & ICC which was held in November 1988, with the patronage of the government also alerted concerned persons in India on similar issues.

1.2. These developments had caused considerable concern among major sections of our people. There were many informal discussions among a cross-section of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) representing scientists, academics, legal professionals, journalists, health organisations, organisations of consumers, trade unions, industry associations and others. Following these discussions the National Working Group was established. Its main objective was to examine the issues surrounding our Patent Laws and to create public awareness of their relevance to national development.

1.3. The group prepared several scholarly studies on various aspects of the patent system in India and other countries. It also examined various issues being negotiated in the Uruguay Round. The group has organised a number of national seminars, conventions, conferences, brain-storming workshops, symposia, etc., during the three-and-a-half years of its existence. These sessions adopted resolutions and issued statements of national concern. These were circulated to the government, the media and the public. The response was much greater than we could have expected.

1.4. We are submitting a set of our important publications as an accompaniment to this memorandum. These publications have also been forwarded to the relevant Ministries for their consideration.

1.5. These three-and-a-half years have proved to be the most fruitful experience for our Group. We have learnt a lot. In the process, the support for our objectives of defending national sovereignty to adopt laws and policies best suited to our national development has become very wide indeed. Our Group has grown from a small debating society to a significant centre in our country. Scientists, economists, lawyers, journalists, Members of Parliament, leaders of all political parties, NGOs and industrial bodies have come to us to join in our activities. We have joined the mainstream of our people. We are, therefore, very pleased to accept your invitation on the Uruguay Round. We are convinced that this first phase will have to be followed by a more intensive, real participatory discussions involving the four pillars of our society—the Parliament, the political parties, the media and the people.

1.6. The GATT, the Uruguay Round and TRIPs, TRIMs and Services are no longer obscure words. We are happy to have contributed on these issues of vital concern to our people.

1.7. In December 1990, we obtained a copy of the Draft Final Text embodying the results of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations tabled during the Brussels Ministerial Meeting. The contents of this document, dealing with several areas, were extremely disturbing to us. We examined them in a Brain-Storming Workshop. Since then, in all the seminars and conferences held by us, we have been stressing five major points. They are:

1.7.1. The Government of India should issue a White Paper and Policy Statement on its stand on all GATT issues;

1.7.2. These issues should be discussed in Parliament with a view to evolving a national consensus on GATT issues;

1.7.3. No International Treaty commitments should be entered into by the government without securing prior consent from the parliament for their ratification and for whatever changes they may be called for in our laws and policies;

1.7.4. Determined efforts be made to press for suspension of negotiations on new issues viz. TRIPs, TRIMs and services under the GATT framework;

1.7.5. The government should take concrete initiatives to mobilise the developing countries so that a common stand can be evolved amongst them at the Uruguay Round of GATT negotiations.

1.8. In spite of repeated approaches we regret to state that the government has not taken any serious initiative on the above points. Instead India diluted its position in April 1989 when it agreed to the inclusion of TRIPs in the Uruguay Round negotiations and let down the Third World countries.

1.9. More than 250 MPs cutting across party lines and several prominent citizens of our country, had in a statement demanded for a debate in the Parliament on the Uruguay Round of GATT negotiations. This demand has been renewed recently by senior leaders of all major national parties, including the ruling party while rejecting the DDT. The National Working Group, while appreciating the stand taken by all political parties, expects these parties to set up teams of experts to examine DDT for a more comprehensive response.

2. VIEWS OF THE WORKING GROUP ON SPECIFIC ISSUES

The detailed views of the Working Group on all issues are contained in the Annexures. We submit below our principal conclusions and recommendations (to be read alongwith the Annexures):

2.1. Agriculture

2.1.0. The DDT proposals will wholly undermine India's prospects for agricultural development;

2.1.1. reduce price support for agricultural commodities;

2.1.2. constrain government's ability to build and maintain buffer stocks to guarantee national food security;

2.1.3. abolish much needed subsidies for seeds, irrigation, power, fertilizers and other inputs vitally needed for spreading new technologies;

2.1.4. prevent the government from maintaining and strengthening the existing public distribution system;

2.1.5. require India to open its market for food imports;

2.1.6. leave our farmers at the mercy of the powerful multinational corporations by extending intellectual property protection to seeds, plants and other bio-technological innovations.

2.2. Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs)

2.2.0. The DDT proposals will result in the creation of manufacturing and trading monopolies, greater domination of multinationals over agriculture and industry, slower diffusion of new technologies and raise barriers to technology transfer and absorption.

2.2.1. The DDT denies the right of government to frame its own intellectual property regime in line with perceived developmental and technological interests;

2.2.2. takes away the sovereign right of the country to exclude certain subject matters from patentability in order to serve its specific national interest;

2.2.3. introduces product patent for all inventions, including food, medicine and chemicals which will prevent the development of better adapted processes for use by the national enterprises for the introduction of cheaper medicines, chemicals and other products (the prices of medicines in India are the cheapest in the world);

2.2.4. extends protection of intellectual property rights to plant varieties in the form of plant breeders' rights which is bound to result in increased prices of seeds, greater domination of agriculture by MNCs and retarded diffusion of new varieties;

2.2.5. provides for a uniform patent term of 20 years as against terms for patents ranging from 5/14 years in the Indian Patent Act, 1970, which will lead to longer monopoly over our trade and manufacture by the MNCs;

2.2.6. provides virtually no scope for a system of compulsory licenses to ensuring the working of the patent in the country of grant as detailed out in the Annexures and thereby eliminates all possibility of imposing obligations on the patent holder in national interest;

2.2.7. seeks the introduction of reversal of burden of proof which will unjustifiably increase the power of the title holder at the expense of the domestic entrepreneur, in particular the small and medium-sized enterprises;

2.2.8. rejects special and differential treatment for developing countries;

2.2.9. does not in reality provide for any transnational arrangement because India will have to accept applicaitons for the subject-matters excluded so far from its laws from January 1993 itself for the purpose of grant of protection from the date of filing of application for the remaining duration of rights from the year 2003; and lastly,

2.2.10. extends the exclusive marketing rights for five years after the grant of marketing approval in the interim period when product patent application is pending or under consideration.

2.3. Trade Related Investment Measures (TRIMs)

2.3.0. The DDT proposals on TRIMs will undermine economic and technological self-reliance. The DDT seeks the removal of all TRIMs within a period of five years, and

2.3.1. extends national treatment to the foreign investors which will lead to lack of control over the direction of foreign investments for the country;

2.3.2. seeks removal of performance obligations imposed on the foreign investors in respect of use of local raw materials, components and equipment, exports, earning of foreign exchange, technology transfer requirements, etc.;

2.3.3. gives the foreign investors in fact better rights than our investors.

2.4. Institutional Matters

2.4.1. The DDT establishes a system of cross-retaliation which legitimises and universalises the Special 301 provision. The inclusion of safeguards provided in the Dunkel Draft Text is of no help here.

2.4.2. The Dunkel proposals should not assume the form of a single undertaking. Separate legal status for TRIPs, TRIMs and GATT should be provided in an effective manner.

2.4.3. Dunkel's Text needs much closer examination for the ambiguities in it.

2.4.4. The GATT Secretariat should have no role in nominating members to the GATT Dispute Settlement Bodies. An alternative dispute settlement system should be worked out to safeguard sovereign rights of contracting parties.

2.5. GATT Rules

2.5.1. Article XVII B, pertaining to the use of quantitative restrictions by developing countries to overcome their balance of payments difficulties has been rendered considerably ineffectual in the Dunkel Draft Text. Developing countries, particularly in recent years, have experienced severe strains on their balance of payments which in turn lead to the burgeoning of their external debt burden. Under such circumstances, these countries need to adopt measures to ameliorate their payments crisis, but Dunkel's proposals will not allow them to do so.

2.5.2. The Special and Differential Treatment allowed to the developing countries has been largely withdrawn in Dunkel's Draft Text. Special provisions have been provided for in an explicit manner only for the least-developed countries as defined by the UN. The withdrawal of special status enjoyed by other developing countries would create a situation where spurious equality of treatment has been applied to the unequal participants in the world economy—the developed and the developing countries.

2.6. General Agreement on Trade in Services

2.6.0. Developing countries agreed to the inclusion of services in the Uruguay Round Negotiations on the condition that the negotiations on GATS would be treated as a parallel track and not linked to the negotiations in goods. The DDT includes services in the same dispute settlement mechanism which establishes a system of cross-retaliation and effectively makes it a part of the single undertaking.

2.6.1. The DDT proposals will result in the control by multinational corporations of vital sectors such as financial services, telecommunication, media, education, health, etc. and will cause distortions in respect of the allocation, utilisation, mobilisation and creation of resources for development.

2.6.2. The Dunkel Draft Text (DDT) package

2.6.2.1. provides access to foreign service enterprises and grants them national treatment in the sectors opened on a request and offer basis;

2.6.2.2. fails to make any specific commitments for increased participation of developing countries in world trade;

2.6.2.3. makes extremely weak provisions to deal with business practices that restrain competition and restrict trade.

2.6.3. Within the GATT framework there are severe implications of opening up of our financial services to foreign interests. In India, financial institutions are obliged to fulfill obligations in priority sectors. The foreign financial institutions would not be undertaking such obligations and this would ultimately result in our financial resources getting diverted from priority sectors.

3. IMMEDIATE TASKS

3.1. The DDT, instead of opening new vistas for the development of the world, will lead to Latin Americanisation of the East and South. It does not offer strategies for strengthening scientific and technological capabilities of the South. On the contrary, it would ensure imprisonment of talents and resources that have been built up at great sacrifices in the South over the last half-a-century. Instead of developing self-reliance (as in Gandhiji's call for Swadeshi), it will open the way for unlimited control by Multinational Corporations of the developing countries' economies. Instead of offering full scope for the use of highly skilled personnel from the South, it will now clear the way for the very organised financial, communications and transport service corporations of the West to strangle the nascent development of the service sector in the developing countries. Dunkel's text ignores the demand of the developing countries for a 'new international economic order' to which the developed countries had agreed to earlier. In its place, Dunkel now is attempting to resurrect the old colonial order.

3.2. The unravelling of the Dunkel Text has already started. Officials of the European Community have rejected Dunkel's proposals. Japan and South Korea have serious doubts. Even the US is pulling in the contrary direction. It will be totally discriminatory if the developing countries were not permitted to suggest changes. Mobilisation of the developing countries is, therefore, essential. Moves are already afoot in this direction. A photocopy of the report appearing in the Special United Nations Service (SUNS) on the meeting held by the G-77 on January 13, 1992, is attached herewith. We would plead that India actively play a central role in safeguarding the interests of the developing countries which are now better informed about the GATT issues after the submission of Dunkel's Draft Text.

3.3. The Working Group has been suggesting mobilisation of developing countries for over two years. Even with our meagre resources, we ourselves organised a Third World Patent Convention in March 1990. Its declaration was acclaimed worldwide. We are prepared to organise a similar convention of NGOs if helped by the government. Last time we had received such support. A meeting of this nature could be useful in generating public opinion in these countries.

3.4. Copies of the full text of the Dunkel's Draft should be made available to all political parties and media and should also be placed in the Parliament Library without any delay so that our country's representatives in Parliament get an opportunity to study the proposals for an indepth debate in Parliament.

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1. We trust that our views would be given serious consideration. In conclusion, we would again urge that the government should issue a White Paper and make a Policy Statement on its stand on all the GATT issues. There should be an extensive debate in Parliament, among the people and the media. Considering that the Dunkel's Draft Text is full of complex issues, a high-powered commission of eminent jurists/judges and scholars in other disciplines be constituted to analyse critically the implications of the Global Package. The commission should also be empowered to take expert testimony on various issues. The recommendations of this commission could constitute an important input in the discussion of these issues.

4.2. Time is of the greatest importance. It is rapidly running out. The people, the parliamentarians, political parties, the press are all becoming restless. They are impatient at the worsening domestic economic situation. There is a massive upsurge of a popular resentment at the influence of external forces—the IMF and the World Bank. We are deeply disturbed to find that our government is echoing the voices of these outsiders; that it is becoming insensitive to the people's concerns. The GATT has joined the IMF and the World Bank, thereby completing the unholy Trinity. On this Republic Day, we urge the government to show that it, and not the unholy Trinity, is incharge here.

Annexure 1

AGRICULTURE

1. Special and Differential Treatment

1.1 The text prepared by Arthur Dunkel does not recognise the right of developing nations to Special and Differential treatment in general. Special and Differential Treatment as we have known it, is really available only for the least developed countries in the Dunkel Draft. Some concessions given to developing countries in terms of longer transition periods, lesser obligations on reductions, etc. cannot be considered as Special and Differential Treatment. Special and Differential Treatment, whcih is a recognition of the different structural position of the developing countries in the world economy, is absent in the Dunkel Text.

2. Import Access

2.0. It will be wrong to assume that India can be prevented from being affected by the provisions on market access by taking recourse to the provisions on balance of payments. To begin with, the balance-of-payments provisions are applicable only on those sections dealing with tariffication (see page L.25, Dunkel Draft). They are not applicable on those sections where market access is being negotiated on the basis of the requirements on current market access and minimum market access.

2 1. The opportunity for developing countries to invoke the balance-of-payments provisions and thus escape from the rigours of tariffication, has been severely impaired by the changes proposed on the balance-of-payments provisions in the Dunkel Draft Text. This is due to the fact that the right to invoke balance-of-payments provisions has been eroded both for existing quantitative restrictions and even more so for the introduction of new quantitative restrictions.

2.1.1. The Dunkel Text proposes that the governments will have to announce 'as soon as possible, time-schedules for the removal of restrictive import measures taken for balance-of-payments purposes' and that justifications have to be provided in case time schedules are not announced.

2.1.2. The text not only says that preference has to be given for 'price-based measures' such as import surcharges when any action is taken for balance-of-payments reasons but also that in case quantitative restrictions have to be applied in a "critical balance-of-payments situation", "justification shall be provided as to the reasons why price-based measures are not an adequate instrument". (p. R.1, Dunkel Draft)

2.2. The Dunkel Draft proposes that current access opportunities cannot be less than the average annual import quantities for the years 1986-88 or what was permitted to be imported during that period, whichever is higher.

2.3. Developing countries such as India have to give a minimum access opportunity of two per cent of domestic consumption in 1993, to be increased to 3.33 per cent by the year 2003. The minimum access opportunity is to be implemented on the basis of a tariff quota at a low or minimum rate.

3. Domestic Support

3.1 The Dunkel Draft does not provide any Special Treatment for the developing countries in the case of price support to farmers. It requires a reduction in the support by developing countries of a minimum of 13.3 per cent, by 2003, in all the cases where the domestic support is more than 10 per cent of the value of production. This will prevent the government from using the instrument of subsidies to change cropping pattern.

3.1.1. The price support is to be calculated by comparing the fixed external price and the administered price in the country, in the base period of 1986 to 1988.

3.2. The ability of the government to give subsidy for agricultural inputs has been severely curtailed in the Dunkel Draft. It allows exemption from reduction for agricultural inputs, only in the case of the subsidies for low-income ro resource-poor producers. This will have major implications for the diffusion of new technologies. The reduction of input subsidy would be applicable, for example, not only to chemical fertilisers but also for bio-fertilisers or new varieties of seeds.

3.3. Another most crucial aspect of the Dunkel Draft Text on internal market is that related to the public distribution system. According to it, the PDS as existing in India will have to be given up since only those eligible on the basis of "clearly-defined criteria related to nutritional objectives" can be given subsidised food.

3.4. The Dunkel Draft further reduces the role of governments by removing the right of governments to intervene in the market. It stipulates that "food purchases by the government shall be made at current market prices". This is applicable for purchases made even to maintain stocks for food security reasons or to support public distribution. This provision will have serious consequences during periods of high food prices.

4. Export Competition

4.1 The developed countries are not required to eliminate export subsidies but only required to reduce their budgetary outlays and quantities by 36 per cent and 24 per cent by 1999. This means that developing countries will continue to be faced by subsidised imports from the developed countries.

4.2 The Dunkel Draft Text allows forms of domestic support which can be used by the developed countries to continue to support their agriculture. These are provisions such as the one on decoupled income support (income support delinked from production) and on regional assistance (assistance for backward areas). Already as a part of its agricultural restructuring programme, the European Community decided in 1986 that 48 per cent of the Community's agricultural land could be designated as less-favoured area. These types of support in developed countries allow the farmers to export below the cost of production.

4.2.1. The Dunkel draft does not protect the developing countries from this kind of subsidised imports, since Article 7.3 states that these subsidies shall be considered as non-actionable for the purposes of countervailing measures.

5. Political Position

5.1. The Dunkel Draft Text does not make a distinction between government support to promote self-reliance and food security and the subsidy to promote exports. This allows the developed countries to interfere in the internal policies of the developing countries.

5.2. The Dunkel Draft Text practically eliminates the capacity of any government to intervene in a sector as vital as agriculture. This is particularly debilitating in the case of the developing countries with backward agriculture.

Annexure 2

TRADE RELATED INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS (TRIPs)

1. The Dunkel Draft Text on TRIPs basically ignores the major concerns of the developing countries including India. No consideration has been given to the underlying fundamental policy objectives of our national system for the protection of intellectual property, including developmental and technological objectives. India would forfeit the right to frame its own intellectual property regime in line with perceived developmental and other social and economic interests after signing the proposed text.

2.1. Acceptance by India of the proposed substantive norms and standards would imply the abandonment of the efforts since the mid-1970s to reform the Paris Convention for the protection of industrial property in favour of developing countries. The proposed TRIPs agreement in fact constitutes a reverse movement. It completely nullifies the progress achieved in the process of revision of the Paris Convention.

2.2. It should also be noted that in all those cases where the TRIPs Text is silent or ambiguous, the jurisprudence and the provisions of the Paris Convention would apply. Article 2 states that "in respect to parts II, III and IV of this agreement, parties shall comply with Articles 1-12 and 19 of the Paris Convention 1967". In other words, on signing the TRIPs text, India would be accepting automatically:

2.2.1. the provisions and jurisprudence of Paris Convention where the TRIPs text is silent or ambiguous; and

2.2.2. revision of the Paris Convention in favour of developed countries.

3.1. The sovereign right of the country to exclude certain subject-matters from patentability in order to serve its specific national interests has been considerably watered down in the TRIPs text.

3.2. The Indian Patents Act, 1970, makes exception in respect of certain claims. All these areas which are considered not patentable in India would have to be covered by patent rights. Product patent would have to be granted for all inventions. If the process patent system is changed to product patent in the field of chemical inventions, the adverse impact on India's current research activity would be considerable. Because of its stage of development and size of business, India has concentrated on applied process research and incremental innovations in the form of improvement engineering. Such work will receive a severe setback.

3.3. Since the work on applied process research or improvement engineering are essential buidling blocks for the upgradation of its S & T capabilities at the current stage of development, India will be granting intellectual property rights in these subject-matters at the risk of accepting technological dependency for all times to come.

4. The TRIPs text demands the extension of intellectual property system to plant varieties either in the form of patents or in the form of plant breeder's rights. The proposed change is bound to result in increase in prices of seeds, greater domination of agriculture by multinational companies and slower diffusion of new varieties. These would be in sharp contrast to the experience of the Green Revolution where the new varieties of seeds evolved by the government institutions percolated down to the fields in a short span of time with very little cost to the individual farmer. Our farmers will have to face great hardship due to the new regime.

5. As against patent terms of 5/14 years in the Indian Patent Act, 1970, the new patent term would be 20 years for all sectors. As the TRIPs text provides for product and process patents, it would be possible for the multinational companies to extend their absolute monopoly to a period longer than 20 years through any number of spells of process patents, especially when 'Reversal of Burden of Proof' is provided for under process patenting.

6. The requirements for ensuring "working" of a patent have been considerably diluted. There is no specific provision for compulsory licensing in the TRIPs Text. All the substantive requirements of

compulsory licensing in the Indian Patents Act, 1970 would have to be dropped. The provisions such as the grant of exclusive licences and grant of compulsory licences for export purposes would have to be deleted altogether. It would not be possible to maintain the current provision of licence of right. The TRIPs Text permits strictly compulsory licence only in the case of a national emergency or other circumstances of extreme urgency or in case of public non-commercial use. There is another provision which allows for the grant of a non-voluntary licence. When such use is authorised to permit the exploitation of a patent ("the second patent") which cannot be exploited without infringing another patent ("the first patent"). But here too the restrictive condition is added that the invention claimed in the second patent shall involve an important technical advance of considerable economic significance in relation to the invention claimed in the first patent.

7. The grant of non-voluntary licences for other use provided in the TRIPs Text is specially allowed only on the grounds of anti-competitive use of patent rights. The adoption of minimum standards and norms concerning abusive use have been changed in the developed countries in the past few years in favour of multinational corporations. Further, at the international level, there are no standards limiting the use of abusive practices in the area of technology transfer. The draft international code of conduct on the Transfer of Technology, which attempted to establish discipline, is yet to be finalised. The developed countries have not allowed successful completion of the Code Negotiations. Similarly, the UNCTAD Code of Conduct on MNCs is also blocked because of the developed countries. It should therefore be quite clear that the discretion of the government to lay down the terms of the patent rights and the conditions under whcih they should be exercised, has been drastically curtailed without any countervailing limitation on the discretion of patent owners as to how they may use or abuse such rights in the territory of the granting state.

8. As against the current provision of fixed royalty linked to turnover, the TRIPs Text provides that "the patent holder shall be paid adequate remuneration in the circumstances of each case, taking into account the economic value of the patent". This would imply a substantial financial burden for the Indian enterprises seeking non-voluntary licenses from the foreign patentees and a heavy drain on foreign exchange.

9.1. There is a claim that the Dunkel's Text is silent on the question whether importation is regarded as working of a patent or not. In fact, there is enough in the text to suggest that improtation would have to be treated virtually as working of patent. For forfeiture and revocation of patent there are clear implications of Article 27 (i) which states that "patents shall be available and patent rights enjoyed without discrimination" as to the place of invention, the field of technology and whether products are imported or locally produced. This provision in the TRIPs Text would debar completely the government from making in its law any provision for revocation of patent merely on the ground that the product is being imported.

9.2. It is also clear that a compulsory licence issued on the ground that the product is being imported, will be treated to be in conflict with the legitimate interests of the patent-holder as defined in the Article 8 and 30 of the TRIPs Text. Further, we must recognise that wherever the TRIPs Text is silent or ambiguous the jurisprudence and provisions of the Paris Convention which are currently under revision would apply vide Article 2 which states that "in respect of paras II, III and IV B of this agreement, parties shall comply with Articles 1-12 and 19 of the Paris Convention 1967". And the Paris Convention in essence treats importation as the working of a patent. The impact of treating importation as the working of a patent will be that the country will become dependent on imports in a big way. There will be unacceptable delay in the indigenisation of production. Due to the monopolisitic regime that will get created, products would be sold at exorbitant prices.

10. The implications of the new provision relating to 'Reversal of Burden of Proof' for the Indian entrepreneurs are enormous. There is a need to appreciate the precarious position of the Indian inventor of an alternative process when it is viewed in the context of the enormous market power and material resources which the multinational companies can mobilise. The offer of such a pre-emptive legal resource to multinationals is to make a mockery of encouraging development of indigenous technology. In the words of the UNCTAD Trade and Development Report, 1991, the derogation from *onus probandi* principles "unjustifiably increase the power of the title holder at the expense of small and medium-sized enterprises". Our acceptance of the provision relating to this 'Reversal of Burden of Proof' will lead the Indian entrepreneurs into vexatious litigation. They will be spending money

to defend their knowhow rights rather than allocating resources for the development of indigenous technologies.

11. The TRIPs Text rejects special and differential treatment for developing countries. There is no possibility of formulation of reservations by developing countries in respect of specific provisions and obligation in the text.

12. The claim that the TRIPs transitional arrangement involves a concession to India is totally unfounded. The claimed transitional arrangement provides for a time bound mechanism aimed at allowing governments to bring their national laws into conformity with the proposed TRIPs Text. The proposed transitional arrangement gives a period of ten years to a developing country like India to change its law. But the same TRIPs agreement takes away also the benefit of this transitional arrangement through Article 70.8 which provides for pipeline protection. Because of this clause of pipeline protection India will have to accept applications for the subject-matters excluded so far from their laws from January 1, 1993 itself, for the puprose of grant of protection from the year 2003 for the remaining duration of rights effective from the date of filing of the patent application. It is a well-known fact that it takes some years for the patent-holder to develop knowhow linked to the concerned invention. The pharmaceutical companies have been themselves stating that it takes eight to ten years from the date of filing a patent to market a new pharmaceutical product. This implies that they require protection for new products basically from the year 2003 which India will be granting as per the TRIPs text. Another clear implication is that in the fields of technology protectable by the applications accepted from 1993 for consideration in 2003, no risk investment will be undertaken by the local enterprises. Many of the ongoing technology development projects in public research institutions and in-house R&D units of Indian enterprises will have to be dropped because there will be no use to pursue further work on them.

13. Further diluting the so-called advantages of a ten-year transitional arrangement provided to the developing countries to change from process to a product patent regime is the exclusive marketing rights provided to an applicant applying for a patent right under Article 70.8, mentioned above. Article 70.9 provides that an application under Article 70.8 "shall be granted exclusive marketing rights for a period of five years after obtaining the market approval". This exclusive marketing right would prevent other companies from introducing a product during the period of market protection.

14. Article 39 provides that for obtaining marketing approvals, information regarding undisclosed text or other data would have to be protected by the concerned national authority in the territory of which such approval is sought. Protection and the consequent non-disclosure of such information which Article 39 grants in such vital areas like drugs and agricultural chemicals, would not be in the larger public interest.

Annexure 3

TRADE RELATED ASPECTS OF INVESTMENT MEASURES (TRIMS)

1. India will have to remove all TRIMs within a period of five years from the date of entry into force of the agreement.

2. Foreign investments will then have absolutely no obligation towards any contribution to our economy in the shape of export performance or even of earning foreign exchange for servicing their own imports and dividend repatriations. It will not be possible to impose any restrictions on imports of raw materials, components and equipment.

3. The DDT proposals extend national treatment to the foreign investors. They deny government the right to place obligations on the foreign investors. Multinational corporations will be totally free to indulge in global corporate planning and ignore the development objectives of the host country. In reality, these proposals imply that the foreign investors would be enjoying better rights than domestic enterprises.

Annexure 4

INSTITUTIONAL MATTERS

1. The Dunkel Draft on institutional matters, on the integrated disputes settlement system as well as the understanding on Rules and Procedures governing settlement of disputes contain provisions which have disastrous implications for India. The idea that because the rules on dispute settlement have been made "time bound, automatic and judicial" in approach, it could be to our advantage is entirely incorrect. It flows from the tendency to view the dispute settlement system in isolation from the legal regimes in different issues areas, and the fact that the scope of the Dunkel Draft extends to critical areas like intellectual property rights, trade related investment measures and services. When, however, account is taken of the fact that the rules which have to be interpreted involve sovereign economic space, and that these have been written in favour of the developed countries and further

that disputes are to be resolved by intermediatory bodies like 'panels' which are to be nominated by the GATT Secretariat and finally that cross-retaliation is permissible, it becomes clear that a "time-bound, automatic and judicial" approach is to the advantage of the developed countries. In brief, the implication of the new DSS is that the developed countries can enforce iniquitous rules involving our sovereign rights promptly and effectively.

2. The Dunkel Draft provides for a system of cross-retaliation which gives legal sanction to the US Special 301 provision, as well as globalises it. It is, therefore, empty to claim that the new disputes settlement system has 'implications' for those countries whose domestic law contains provisions for unilateral retaliation." Where is the need for unilateral retaliation when the interests of the developed countries like the United States have been written into the TRIPs, TRIMs and GATS texts, and cross-retaliation is legally permissible. The US, for instance, has invoked the Special 301 provision against India stating that it provides inadequate protection in the area of intellectual property rights and therefore threatened to retaliate in the goods sector. The unilateral cross-retaliation threat is necessitated by the fact that at present GATT does not either provide for rules governing TRIPs or it follows, for a system of cross-retaliation. But once the demand for 'adequate' protection is conceded and a system of cross-retaliation is legally sanctioned, the need for unilateral retaliation disappears. Why would a state involve unitlateral measure when it can secure its interests through a multilateral mechnaism? What is worse is that the Dunkel Text now gives all developed countries the right to cross-retaliate. It has thus universalised the Special 301 provision.

3. It is being argued that while cross-retaliation has been provided for, it is permitted only as a last resort and further that the safeguard of arbitration has been included. These claims represent the proverbial clutching at straws. The first claim is hardly credible when it is remembered that it is precisely because in some sectors there is no scope for retaliation that the developed countries have insisted on a cross-retaliation provision. In other words, cross-retaliation is not permitted as a 'last but rather as a first resort. The "hierarchical structure" is almost a priori exhausted. Therefore, also the resort to arbitration with respect to whether the principles and procedures concerning cross-retaliation have been followed is going to be of little consequence. What is more, the provision relating to cross-retaliation has been drafted in a manner that the principles and procedures would easily be conformed to. For instance, the shift of retaliation across sectors or agreements is permissible if the sanctions within the same sector/agreement are "not practicable or effective. The words' practicable or effective" are broad enough to cover practically any situation.

4. The Dunkel Draft does not confer separate legal status on the TRIPs, TRIMs and GATS agreements. All claims to the contrary are incorrect. The claim that the TRIPs, TRIMs and GATS texts have separate legal status would only be meaningful if states are allowed to keep out of these separate agreements in case they are not viewed in their national interest. However, this option is not available, or rather ruled out, by the fact that the Dunkel Draft has been presented as a single understanding and what is more cross-retaliation across agreements is permissible completely negating the meaning of separate legal status of individual agreements.

5. The Dunkel Draft is, as is evident, an extremely lengthy, technical and complex document. It, therefore, needs to be closely scrutinised for ambiguities and silences in the text which could later be utilised by the developed countries to secure interpretations in their favour. For example, in our view Article 27 para (1) of the TRIPs Text which states that patent rights are enjoyable without discrimination as to whether "products are imported or locally procured" can be interpreted to mean that importation must be treated as the working of patent. Thus, an article by article scrutiny of the Dunkel Draft must be done with immediate effect.

6. The proposed disputes settlement system will ensure that the interpretations of a developed country contracting party will prevail whenever it is involved in a dispute with a developing country. As provided in the text, in case of a dispute where consultations between parties fail, a 'panel' shall be established at the request of one of the parties. This panel consisting of three members is to be nominated by the GATT Secretariat. This should be unacceptable. It would not be an exaggeration to assert that once the GATT Secretariat is empowered to nominate the Panel the possibility of a dispute being settled in favour of a developing country will be drastically reduced. The fact that a developing country national can be nominated to the panel at the request of a developing country party will be of little avail for a majority of the members will be normally from the developed countries. The same will be true of the appellate body. Therefore, an alternative disputes settlement system must be worked out and presented in the negotiations. ■

Pressler and Proliferation

G.S. BHARGAVA

The US Senator, Larry Pressler's gratuitous confirmation of Pakistan's capability to fabricate nuclear devices, alongwith his simultaneous endorsement of India's non-military intentions in the matter, has evoked two kinds of reaction within the country, both off the mark. The first is the sense of elation with which the officials have interpreted it as vindication of India's refusal to initiate or respond to de-nuclearisation efforts in the region. The second is Lal Krishna Advani's demand for the exercise of India's "nuclear option".

The reasons for the American Senator's loquacity on a subject on which officials and even legislators are wont to be diplomatic are not easy to fathom. It can be hubris or he may be projecting the hard face of the US Administration. It reminds one of Henry Kissinger's warning to Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto in 1976 that the US would make "an example" of Pakistan for its refusal to abandon a plutonium reprocessing effort, except that Kissinger was then the Secretary of State and he did not involve India in settling scores with Bhutto. Ultimately, Washington prevailed upon France to abort the deal for establishment of the reprocessing plant, for which Paris has now agreed to pay a compensation of 130 million dollars to Islamabad.

As a result, many in Pakistan suspected American acquiescence, if not involvement, in Bhutto's subsequent murder at the hands of Gen. Zia-ul-Haque. Bhutto had claimed in his pre-execution testament that Pakistan was "on the threshold of full nuclear capability" and that "all we needed was the reprocessing plant", short-circuited by the US. It has led to a widespread sentiment among the Pakistani elites that the key to their country's independence and progress lay in nuclear weapons and defiance of Washington was essential for the assertion of their nationalism. A similar situation had prevailed in Pehlavi Shah's Iran with well-known results.

Although Gen Zia had sent Bhutto to the gallows, he did not—or could not—give up the effort to acquire nuclear weapons capability. The only change was that instead of the plutonium route pursued by India and sought to be emulated by Bhutto, Pakistan set out to build enriched uranium Bombs. As a result, first, the Pakistani military was drawn into the programme, while Bhutto for his own reasons, would have retained civilian control over the project, brandishing it for political and personal aggrandisement purposes. Secondly, from Bhutto's personal obsession to be the father of the Pakistan bomb, it became a national cause.

In March 1987—about a decade after Bhutto's execution—Dr Abdul Qadir Khan who is in charge of the clandestine Kahuta uranium enrichment plant told Kuldip Nayar in a controversial interview that he had succeeded in "upgrading" enrichment of uranium "to 90 per cent to achieve the desired result". He also immodestly added that India had yet to match Pakistan's record in the enrichment field and that "what the CIA has been saying about our possessing the bomb is correct." Touched to the quick, an official of the Indian nuclear establishment retorted that they, too, could do it.

No doubt Khan's interview was later sought to be denied but within a few weeks Gen Zia told the *Time* magazine that "Pakistan has the capability of building the Bomb whenever it wishes.... Once you have acquired the technology, which Pakistan has, you can do whatever you like." Compared to such assertions by the scientist in charge of the project and the then President of Pakistan, the US Senator's statements are not revelations warranting the kind of glee in the South Block or the demand voiced by Advani.

More importantly, notwithstanding Zia's declaration, the then US President, Ronald Reagan, had more than once overridden the Symington Amendment to foreign assistance legislation to enable Pakistan to receive economic aid and concessional military supplies. The last occasion was in 1988 when Reagan certified that Pakistan was not seeking to make nuclear weapons. That had put paid to Rajiv Gandhi's expectation that the US would formally acknowledge what its intelligence agency had been saying. Two years later, however, President Bush let the present Pressler version of the amendment prevail denying aid to Pakistan. That Pakistan's usefulness as a strategic ally and conduit for US arms to the *mujahideen* had ceased with the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, should not be overlooked in this context.

This is not necessarily to imply that Washington is insincere in its efforts to curb the spread of weapons of mass destruction but to highlight that the concern is coloured by the primacy of geopolitical considerations. Viewed in this perspective, Pakistan's capability and intentions affect India more than they hurt Pressler's ego or conflict with US priorities of the time. As an American academic once said, India, Pakistan or any other Third World country cannot pose a nuclear threat to the USA in the foreseeable future. But during the Cold War years there was the danger of a showdown with nuclear weapons in South Asia or elsewhere, triggering an East-West global confrontation with chances of escalation to the nuclear level.

That fear has now dissipated. So, for India or Pakistan the danger of a nuclear war is more immediate than global. There is, of course, the effect of such a calamity on the fragile international system. The US has a stake in it and so have most other countries, including India and Pakistan. In the words of Alva Myrdal, a consistent friend of India who had joined forces with our Vishnu Trivedi in facing the super powers in the 18-nation Disarmament Commission, "... in disarmament nothing can be done if one does not consider the broader, long-term interest of the world, where one's security is part of the more general picture..." So, it will be suicidal to wait for the disappearance of nuclear weapons from the face of the earth for India and Pakistan to agree to give them up.

India has to decide whether it is in its interest to let Pakistan pursue its weapons potential to the logical conclusion and match or overcome it in the name of deterrence or whether both should agree to freeze it at their present levels so that the possibility of use of the weapons in a future conflict is eliminated. India's threat perception becomes relevant in this connection. K. Subrahmanian, a former Director of the semi-official Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses, had once seen a sea-based threat from the US. That was in the wake of the despatch of a US Seventh Fleet task force into the Bay of Bengal during the 1971 war. I do not think even he shares that fear now. Considering America's conventional arms superiority it does not have to pose a nuclear threat to India for whatever purpose. The same is the case with the UK and France which even Subrahmanian never regarded as sources of threat.

As far as China is concerned, as Rajiv Gandhi had said, we have lived with its possession of nuclear weapons and acquisition of ICBM capability for over 20 years and can do so in the future. Further, China should have no incentive to use nuclear weapons against a non-nuclear adversary. It may be tempted to do so only if and when India weaponises its existing technical capability and develops a credible delivery

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different from the conventional strategy. Because of the awesome destructive potential of nuclear weapons their actual use is unthinkable. Even in a low-level nuclear combat with millions of fatalities there will be no winner, apart from the doubtful survivability of the crude weapons. It is more so in the case of close neighbours like India and Pakistan. Radiation is no respector of political boundaries.

Secondly, a nuclear threat, to be effective, has to be doubly credible. Flaunting the weapon is fraught with high risk and low return. Israel is an instance in point. Tel-Aviv has made it clear that only when it is faced with extinction—which some Arab states had once vowed to wreak on it—will it make use of its known but undemonstrated nuclear weapons arsenal. The adversaries got the message and deterrence seemed to work. Further, by preempting acquisition of the capability by hostile neighbours like Iraq it has ensured that there is no India-Pakistan-type situation in the Middle East.

There is no comparably credible nuclear doctrine for India. There cannot be because the threat India faces is qualitatively different. The scenarios projected by experts are extrapolations from the European situation at the height of the Cold War and have no relevance in our region. For instance, India cannot—hypothetically speaking—threaten Pakistan with nuclear destruction to stop it from meddling in Kashmir. The bluff will be called. India cannot even threaten to unleashn a full-scale conventional war—for obvious reasons. It is more so in Pakistan's case. In other words, avoidance of hostilities during the last one decade of intense mutual tension is not a case of nuclear deterrence but the result of past experience that a military conflict between the two cannot be conclusive.

Finally, India's weapons capability is built largely on the production of safeguards-free plutonium in inefficient power reactors. It cannot go on indefinitely because of the economic cost, among others. The exchequer is subsidising heavy water to the tune of Rs 41,00,000 for every tonne. The import input of the missile programme is also unduly high. Pakistan is even more vulnerable in this respect.

Thus, both countries will be condemned to a blind race in the acquisition of primitive capabilities, without reliable command and control procedures and without

Non-Proliferation: Tough Times Ahead

GURSHARAN S. DHANJAL

Senator Larry Pressler's statements made during his recent visits to India and Pakistan add upto the following:

One, his finding that Pakistan has already acquired nuclear weapons.

Two, that India after demonstrating in 1974 its ability to explode a nuclear device, took a voluntary decision not to move towards weapons capability.

And three, that Pakistan along with certain West Asian Islamic countries, and some of the newly independent Central Asian Republics could form a fundamentalist group of nations possessing nuclear weapons. Such a development could effectively write 'finis' to the entire non-proliferation exercise in our world.

The net effect of the assessment of the nuclear situation in the subcontinent presented by the US Senator is that there is a dangerous asymmetry, because Pakistan has a readily deployable cache of horror bombs while India does not. Therefore, there was hardly anything surprising in P.V. Narasimha Rao's summary rejection of the US-sponsored Camp David-type summit of all concerned to resolve the issue of nuclear non-proliferation in South Asia. In fact, the rejection came at the right time. There was a danger of intelectual busybodies lapping up the concept, if only for the seeming novelty of it.

While India had reason to be pleased at the clean chit it got from Pressler over the bomb, and the assurance that the Pressler Amendment will not be extended to it, one cannot help wondering if the Senator's enthusiasm for a Camp David-type is not misplaced. What Pressler perhaps meant was that the US, as a friend of both India and Pakistan, could act as an honest broker between them.

But his idea suffers from serious infirmities. First, as Prime Minister Rao himself has pointed out, India and Pakistan have bilateral relations, and meet from time to time to discuss matters of mutual concern. They do not, therefore, need a mediator. Secondly, in what essential way would a Camp David-type conference be different from the five-nation meet on a nuclear-free South Asia which Pakistan has proposed and India shot down? The Camp David model for ending Indo-Pak differences would presume a convergence of views in the two countries on essential elements that constitute their national policies. There is no evidence of that.

Lest there be any room for confusion about Pakistan's intentions, a spokesman at Islamabad declared that his government had no desire to give up its nuclear programme. Since this programme has caused President Bush to suspend US military and economic aid to Pakistan on the assumption that Islamabad means to acquire nuclear weapons, Pressler's efforts towards non-proliferation in South Asia should have been confined to Pakistan.

However intense the Senator's commitment to the cause of nuclear non-proliferation, he is unlikely to be helped in his mission even by his compatriots. There is still a school of thought in Pentagon that believe that, as a trusted ally, Pakistan should not be pushed too hard on the aid and non-proliferation issues. The danger, according to this perception, is that Pakistan may then move closer to an intransigent China and an Islamic fundamentalist Iran. Such views apparently are not inconsiderable, as is indicated by reports that the State Department also is inclined to waive the Pressler Amendment for resumption of aid to Pakistan.

Since Pressler himself now associated a nuclear threshold Pakistan with an emerging Islamic fundamentalist community of nations in the region, tackling a wayward Islamabad should be the primary charge of Washington. US will be under pressure to formulate a long-term policy towards a Pakistan in the vanguard of a group of Islamic nations some of whom may also emerge as sources of nuclear threat. Pressler, Washington and even Pentagon should ponder whether the spectre of nuclear proliferation in Central Asia should not demand greater attention than South Asia. After all, the one nation which exploded a device way back in 1974 receives a good chit from the Senator while the other, on the threshold or beyond, is today a common factor between South Asia and Central Asia.

It seems that the time has come when India ought not to leave itself unprotected against a possible Pakistani threat, more so after the hints it is said to have dropped in summer 1990 to US shuttle diplomat Robert Gates who now heads CIA that an Indian escalation on the conventional plane would invite immediate Pak nuclear retaliation. Successive governments have so far allayed public misgivings by offering the bland assurance that Indian forces will never have to fight an unequal war, but this may no longer suffice. Bomb advocates were, as it was, demanding a less ambiguous declaration of a matching capability and they would now cite the Pressler certificate of India's nuclear virtue to press their case. There is no gainsaying the need for paying very careful thought by the government to evolve an appropriate answer consistent with the overriding national interest in safeguarding the country from nuclear blackmail.

Therefore, in judging what national interest requires, it will be a tragic mistake not to take into account the strength of international sentiment against proliferation. While India cannot indeed put its security in jeopardy to keep in the good books of friends, however powerful, there is also no case for rejecting out of hand any ideas for preventing a nuclear conflict. The argument that it is too late to think now in terms of stopping because the Rubicon has already been crossed is indeed weighty but it is not conclusive. All restraints, including such detailed and intensively policed one, like Salt-II are in essence confidence-building measures because their effectiveness depends in the ultimate analysis on each side desisting from evasive subterfuges.

Signing the non-proliferation treaty is no doubt meaningless in the South Asian situation; a nuclear-free zone too will be a misnomer. But the case for a solemn agreement not to be the first to use the bomb still remains valid, not least because it will be in keeping with India's passionate pleas for outlawing the horror weapons. ■

The author is a Lecturer in Political Science, Shivaji College, Delhi, and a Scholar in International Relations, Department of Political Science, University of Delhi.

Thoughts on Republic Day Celebrations

AJIT BHATTACHARJEA

What we read and saw depicted so graphically in photographs on the front pages on January 27, is no less than a national tragedy. Our tricolour, unfurled hastily in a curfewed square in Srinagar, guarded by soldiers with automatics at the ready, by an outside political leader with no local following. What was the message conveyed except raising the flag in hostile territory?

Yet, this was the same Lal Chowk in which crowds had massed to cheer Nehru and Sheikh Abdullah and hail Kashmir's accession to India. It was the same Srinagar where I had watched the people welcome Indian troops flown in to defend the city against Pathan tribals sponsored and supplied by Pakistan, with local trucks and their drivers ferrying them to the front. Where a hastily-raised local militia, composed mostly of Muslims, policed the streets and guarded vital installations when the Maharaja's police had fled.

That is the national achievement that the scene in Srinagar on Republic Day—a day set aside to celebrate our constitutional commitment to popular self-rule—converts to tragedy. More than ever before we need to remember how and why the people of Kashmir entered the Union, if steps are ever to be taken to regain their confidence. I had the privilege of witnessing some of those events and have written about them before. It seems appropriate to recall the details now to establish that they were not a dream, but a historic reality.

October was ending when I first glimpsed Kashmir from the window of a Dakota barely clearing the Banihal. It was weighed down with an unusual load: the seats and passenger fittings had been taken out to accommodate a large fuel tank strapped down in the cabin. A friendly pilot had agreed to squeeze in a cub newsman on the flight from New Delhi. Domestic air services had been suspended and their aircraft commandeered to airlift soldiers and supplies to Srinagar. Hundreds of well-armed tribals had plundered their way to within five miles of the dirt airstrip at Badgam before being halted by the first contingent of Indian troops flown in on October 27, 1947. Maharaja Hari Singh, who had fled to Jammu, had reluctantly signed the instrument of accession to India. It was accepted after the accession was endorsed by the National Conference leader, Sheikh Abdullah, who had just been let out of jail.

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AS we circled to land three days later, the Valley looked peaceful. Green fields interspersed by rushing streams, poplar-lined roads, tall chinar trees, their leaves turning russet, the blue waters of the Dal Lake. Beyond Srinagar, however, spirals of smoke were evidence of the burning and looting that had delayed the tribal drive on Srinagar, enabling our troops to land at the nick of time. Several aircraft were being unloaded at Badgam. Next to the unprotected airstrip, the road was lined with trucks and buses, with their local drivers waiting to ferry men and weapons to Baramula road, where the raiders had been pushed back a few miles. Nearer the capital, groups of the National Conference militia, armed with *lathis,* were guarding the bridges and patrolling the roads. If one or two of the bridges over the numerous canals and streams had been blown, the lead troops could not have stemmed the invasion. Yet, in the heart of Srinagar, shops were open. The roads were full of people of all communities. There was no hint of communal discord, unlike Delhi where post-partition tension continued until Mahatama Gandhi's martyrdom.

I was again in Kashmir a year later, on assignment for *The Hindustan Times.* Two other correspondents shared a houseboat with me on the Jhelum. Tourists were scarce and the roads emptied in the evenings, but we never felt insecure. By then regular Pakistani troops were openly in the battle, but our soldiers continued to enjoy local support. Weapons were loaded only at the front. This was evident on trips well outside Srinagar. On one occasion, the popular Indian commander, then Major General KS Thimmaya (later Chief of Army Staff) took Sheikh Abdullah in his jeep all the way to the Gurez Valley, recently wrested from Pakistan. I followed with his ADC. We were welcomed all the way and had to be watchful only when within range of Pakistani artillery. Later, while the war was still raging, I accompanied Sheikh Abdullah and his wife on a morale-boosting tour of the Valley. We travelled in a single car, with no security guards. We never felt the need of any. He was made

(Continued on page 29)

Do We Need a New Constitution?

S. VISWAM

For the last two decades, a number of political scientists and thinkers in India have been chasing the presidency mirage. As a way-out of the numerous political challenges and problems confronting the nation, they have been advocating a systemic change, either through an entirely new Constitution or through substantial modifications to the existing one. From time to time, and especially when problems accumulate and strain the polity, they have been calling for constitutional reforms on the one hand, and the replacement of the parliamentary system by a presidential system on the other.

Some see in the advocacy of the presidential system an attempt towards greater and sinister centralisation of authority while others argue that if the parliamentary system has not enhanced the strength and quality of the polity over four decades, it ought to be abandoned. Over all, the temptation to attribute the shortcomings of the polity to the parliamentary system has been all too strong, and those who advocate a systemic change do it in the belief that the present Westminster style of democracy is neither suited to the genius of the Indian people nor workable. The alternative projected is invariably a resort to the presidential form, based on either the American or the French models or on a combination of both.

The latest to meet the proposal for a new Constitution consistent not only with the internal conditions in India but also the revolutionary changes sweeping the world is former diplomat and administrator B.K. Nehru. Delivering the Ranganathan Memorial Lecture in the capital recently, Nehru spelled out in some detail his vision of a new India based on a new Constitution which would not only place real power in the hands of the people at the lowest level of administrative and political hierarchy but also ensure durable stability at the Centre.

The last issue of Mainstream *(Republic Day Special) carried a contribution by B.K. Nehru, captioned, "A Fresh Look at the Constitution", based on the S. Ranganathan Memorial Lecture, which he had delivered on January 12, 1992. The above contribution is a response to B.K. Nehru's lecture by the eminent journalist who is at present the chief of the New Delhi bureau of* Deccan Chronicle, *which has published it.*

Since the suggestion for a systemic change comes from one of the highly respected public figures of the country who has had a wealth of experience not only as an administrator but as an observer of the functioning of Indian democracy, Nehru's views, which undoubtedly are timely, need to be taken seriously. He has not been the only one in India who has had reason to be disenchanted with the present system. He is in the distinguished company of a number of political observers who have faced something of a dilemma in suggesting remedies for extricating the Indian polity from its strains and stresses. The idea of a systemtic change, from the parliamentary to the executive presidency, was first articulated in the late seventies and early eighties when national politics was in deep ferment and there were signs of the country breaking up under the weight of conflicting pulls and pressures. It is not surprising that the idea should be again projected at the present moment, when things are certainly not rosy on the national political landscape.

But first, let us have a peep into the scheme of things envisaged by Nehru. The premise, for a change is that first, the present Constitution is such that it almost inevitably and increasingly catapulted into seats of power the more undesirable elements of society. "The proportion of criminals and history-sheeters in the legislative assemblies of the country have been increasing from election to election."

Secondly, the will of the leaders at the Centre, State and district levels was being substituted for the laws of the land.

Thirdly, under the present system, unpopular decisions, even when imperative in national interest, cannot be taken because "the vote has become our god".

Fourthly, both inefficiency and instability are inevitable when the political life of a Chief Minister depends on hordes of rapacious legislators whose hunger for power, pelf and loaves and fishes of offices knows no limits.

And lastly, elections have become so expensive that there is no possible honest way in which "that kind of money" can be raised.

Nehru, therefore, suggests that there is need for new Constitution mature enough to provide the transition to a peaceful, honest, just and progressive nation, a Constitution which can fully reflect the aspirations of the people by giving due recognition to the panchayats at the village level serving as a reflection of their will and ensuring a stable government at every level. The new Constitution should be based on the essentiality of separation of powers, the legislature must be separated from the executive by making it impossible for any member of the legislature to hold any office of profit under the government including a ministership. This would immediately and automatically reduce drastically the attraction of becoming a legislator.

Nehru would have the President elected by a large enough electoral college, on the basis of proportional representation and a single transferable vote. The country should be notionally divided into four zones (north, east, south and west) and the successful candidate should be required to get not only an overall majority of votes cast throughout the country but also a specified minimum percentage of votes in all the zones. Further, the executive President should have a fixed tenure of years (making a second term impossible) without any possibility of his removal during that term except by impeachment for moral delinquency. The same terms of tenure would apply to the Governor, but in Nehru's concept, the Governor would also be directly elected by the people of the State.

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BEFORE assessing the merits and demerits of these undoubtedly novel and far-reaching proposals, it needs to be admitted that by and large there seems to be consensus among political thinkers in the country over the reasons why the existing system seems unable to deliver the goods. The first of these reasons is the manner in which legislators get elected and the second is the manner in which they behave after getting elected. The extraordinary loopholes in the People's Representation Act, which are taken advantage of by both the candidates and the electorate, have generated a widespread demand for electoral reforms. A national debate has been on in the country for the last two decades on the extent and depth of the needed reforms; but unfortunately, while piece-meal changes have been effected, a comprehensive system of reforms has yet to be introduced despite the availability of any number of suggestions and ideas, some of them emanating from the Election Commission itself. Secondly, it is also an accepted fact nowadays that an average politician's concept of public service is the acquisition of a ministership either at the Centre or in the States with all the attendant perks of office and status.

Giving expression to this view, President Venkataraman, while inaugurating the Governors' Conference last month, described the "lure of office" as the "foremost infirmity in a politician" and went on to say that defection was its barest manifestation. Referring to the enormous size of the Ministries in certain States, the President noted the "instances where almost every legislator of the ruling party has had to be placated with ministership or ministerial type of sinecure." Our body politic, he added, cannot carry so much adipose without detriment to the heart of the democratic functioning. The absence of a limit to the size of the Ministry encourages hopes of office in a defector.

"Democracy is the worst system but there is none better," said Winston Churchill. The world over his remarks have echoed and re-echoed, and the last word on the controversy over the supremacy of democracy versus totalitarian was effectively delivered last year when country after country in Eastern Europe opted for a systemic change and embraced democracy. The reference point of debate in India is not over the efficacy of democracy, which fortunately has dug deep roots but over the instrumentality of its conduct and functioning. To those who have abiding faith in the sanctity and validity of the present system, the question of a shift to the executive presidency is a non-issue. To others, it is very much a live issue as Nehru's assessment hints at.

It has often been asked why the talk of a systemic change was unheard of in the days of Jawaharlal Nehru, and why did the advocacy of changeover to the presidential form surface in the late sixties and early seventies when Indira Gandhi was at the helm of affairs. During the Indira Gandhi era, when much merit was seen in the presidential system, the controversy tended to revolve around a single individual (often a single family) and her political fortunes, future and career. When leaders like Abdul Rahman Antulay and Vasant Sathe championed the cause of changeover in the seventies and early eighties, the demand was seen as an attempt to convert Prime Minister Indira Gandhi into President Indira Gandhi. A sense of dread at the already powerful Indira Gandhi becoming an even more powerful President Indira Gandhi seemed to have gripped the national psyche, leading many observers to decry the proposal for a systemic change.

Commenting on the controversy, civil liberties leader and former Judge of the Bombay High Court, Justice Tarkunde had said: "The presidential form of government is very dangerous because it consists of a tremendous concentration of power in the hands of one person, which is likely to lead to the destruction of democracy and establishment of authoritarianism. The concentration of power has been the path followed by a number of countries in the Third World. Look at Pakistan and Bangladesh. What India needs for the proper functioning of democracy is decentralisation of power. We are a country of many cultures and in such a situation democracy can only mean a diffusion of power. I regard the presidential system as the greatest danger to India. It would be the beginning of the end of democracy.... A change in the Constitution would require an amendment to Article 368, the overruling of the Keeshavananda Bharati judgement of the Supreme Court and going before the people. A two-thirds majority would be required to change Article 368 of the Constitution which gives Parliament its constituent powers. An alteration in the basic structure of the Constitution cannot be made by Parliament which is a creation of the Constitution. A change can only be made following a referendum which gives Parliament the power to change the structure of the Constitution."

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IN the late seventies, it so happened, probably because of an increased sense of neglect, that a number of Pradesh Congress Committees in northern States began clamouring for convening a constituent assembly to usher in the presidential form. As if responding to the clamour, the then Congress President, Dev Kant Barooah, set up a Committee under the chairmanship of Sardar Swaran Singh with Abdul Rehman Antulay as its Secretary, to examine the Constitution and recommend changes. The Committee's report never saw the light of the day. After the supercession of three Supreme Court judges (A.N. Grover, J.M. Shelat and H.R. Khanna) in favour of Justice A.N. Ray as the Chief Justice of India, there were roars of protests and the independence of the judiciary was seen as coming under threat. The Opposition's refrain at that time was: "First hit the bureaucracy, then the judiciary, then the press and ultimately the army." A changeover to the presidential system, with herself ensconced as President, was seen as the ultimate destination of Indira Gandhi's strategy to strengthen herself,

The debate over the systemic change received short shrift during the Janata era. However, one Congressman who has assiduously been promoting the resort to executive presidency is none other than Vasant Sathe, who tried to refine the entire concept by making it more attractive to the sceptic. In his book *Towards a Social Revolution,* formally released on January 14, 1984, by no less a dignitary than President Zail Singh himself, Sathe stressed the need for a "national authority which should be elected directly by all the citizens of the country". Such an authority was necessary to maintain the unity and integrity of the country as a nation, and this turn would automatically impel the growth of more than one national party operating at the national level. Sathe envisaged the direct election of the President, the Vice-President and the Prime Minister. They would be answerable to Parliament in matters of policy but they would not be liable to be removed by Parliament except by way of an impeachment requiring a two-thirds majority of both houses. All this could be done just by amending Article 52 to 56 of the Constitution. Sathe defined the need for reorganising the parliamentary system and creating a nationally elected authority with the mandate and sanction of the entire nation thus: "Fissiparous tendencies having strictly regional, parochial and chauvinistic appeals are raising their heads, threatening and endangering the very unity and integrity of India as a nation. We have seen from experience in this very subcontinent that it does not take long for a nation to disintegrate if parochial and linguistic considerations overpower and dominate the feeling of a united nation. It is therefore a matter of serious urgency for all intellectuals and thinking people in the country to start a debate for considering ways and means and steps required to be taken to prevent any such unfortunate development."

In his latest book, *National Government: Agenda for a New India,* Sathe argues in the chapter *The Changing Political Systems,* that the President in India is not, in terms of our Constitution, just a titular head like the monarch in the UK. Under our Constitution, the President is an elected authority, elected by an electoral college consisting of members of both Houses of Parliament and the members of legislative assemblies of the States. "If we were to provide under Article 54," he adds, "that the President would be elected directly by the entire electorate of the nation in a national election, the character of the sanction behind the chief executive would undergo a basic structural change. This would ensure a sense of unity and oneness among the 540 voters of India who will be together electing this one individual. This will promote the growth of party organisations at the national level when they will be required to organise an election campaign, back one individual as head of the country, overriding considerations of region, caste or creed."

The basic difference between the theses of Vasant Sathe and B.K. Nehru lies not so much in the ultimate destination of change but in the methodology. Sathe would prefer a change affecting the top, while leaving the other structural entities like Parliament and legislatures intact, even while retaining the present arrangement in the States. Nehru, on the other hand, advocates the radicalisation of the entire system, through an entirely new Constitution which would provide for the very kinds of safeguards in terms of national unity and integrity which Sathe also has in mind. But in Nehru's scheme of things, a number and variety of structural changes will be required at the State level too inasmuch as he contemplated an elected Governor also. The federal concept, which is basic to the Indian system as it exists, will have to undergo a substantial change, opening the door to a confrontation and conflict on occasions between an elected President and an elected Gövernor. It is not clear how Nehru hopes to overcome the eventuality to an elected President at the Centre having to dismiss an elected Governor in a State and bring the State under President's rule. Secondly, Nehru's concept would probably require a thorough overhaul of the constitutional provisions governing Centre-State relations, always a thorny issue in India and one which is still in the process of refinement in terms of the recommendations of the Sarkaria Commission.

The ultimate question however is whether the people of India, who have gone through the experience of ten general elections and as many as 275 elections to Assemblies, are ready for a systemic change. Their conduct and approach to statecraft have been conditioned by four decades of education in a particular process of governance and response to it. Not without at least several years of intensive education can their mindset be influenced to accept an entirely new form of system which will bring along with it a totally new administrative, political and electoral culture. There will have to be years of prolonged and informative national debate before the country can be readied for a change of systems, and this is probably why the controversy over a systemic change is at present confined to the top echelons of the intelligentsia and not percolated down below. ■

AJIT BHATTACHARJEA: Republic Day

(Continued from page 25)

welcome and cheered at every step.

Nor was there any trace of hostility evident on subsequent assignments and holidays in the valley, though the newly-educated younger generation complained in the coffee house and the university that the best jobs were going to outsiders. Tourists camped in the remotest corners of the Valley, feeling far more secure than they did in the cities they came from elsewhere in India. Political discontent surfaced after Abdullah was detained in 1953. But even in 1965, Pakistan made no headway when hundreds of infiltrators were sent into the Valley. Many were handed over to the police by local villagers. Nor was there any attempt to embarass our troops when war broke out later that year; or, again, in 1971. In 1989, Farooq Abdullah condemned secessionism at a public meeting in Lal Chowk.

Armed militancy became a serious threat and found local support when New Delhi's commitment to secularism began to be widely questioned and the abrogation of the constitutional safeguards embodied in Article 370 threatened. Pakistan made full use of the opportunity. We need to investigate the reasons objectively and reverse them if the tricolour is to flutter in Srinagar again as a symbol of allegiance, not Central authority.

THE lessons to be learnt extend beyond Kashmir. Armed unrest is not limited to the Valley, though alienation has gone furthest there. Throughout the country, the manner in which the Republic Day is observed has become a demonstration of state power, not the celebration of popular self-rule that it was meant to be. Inheriting the style of British imperialism and aping the defunct Soviet Union, the armed and police forces dominate the occasion.

As a result, there is minimal public participation. Those admitted arrive as silent spectators and leave as soon as possible after the VIPs. Excessive security has made things worse. More and more, the parade has become an official, urban, VIP-dominated function; unfurling the flag a symbol of power rather than popularity. "We, the people.," proclaimed to give the Constitution legitimacy, are ignored. Yet, if they are not encouraged to feel part of the system, they cannot be expected to resist the extremists, whether described as terrorists, militants, insurgents, Naxalites or infiltrators.

After more than 40 years, it is time that we junked the parades and encouraged instead voluntary, self-organised, non-official celebrations dotted all over the countryside. That would express and generate popular support for, and commitment to defend, the Constitution and the rights it guarantees. ■

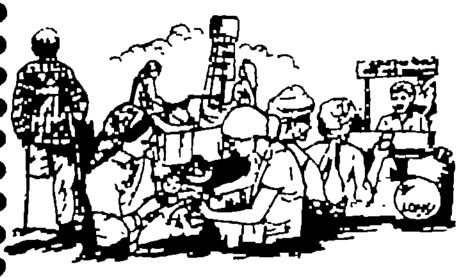
Spectrum OF HARYANA'S PROGRESS

HARYANA
Silver Jubilee Year
1991-92

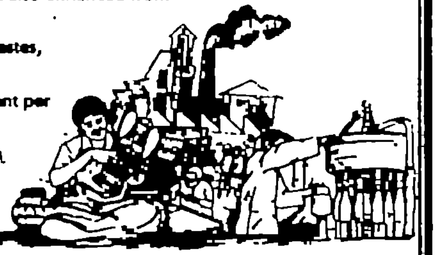
The Republic Day is the sanctum sanctorum of our Sovereign Socialistic Secular Democratic Republic. On this day we resolve to work hard to prove ourselves worthy of our Constitution.

Haryana, which is about one percent of the total area of the country, has taken rapid strides for creating a glow of joy on face of every Haryanavi. We have recently launched a 25-Point Programme with a motto of "Peace and Development" for bringing economic prosperity and social justice, establishing a rule of law by strengthening the democratic institutions and caring for the Economically Weaker Sections, the Backward Classes, the Scheduled Castes, the Youth and the Old, the Women and the Children.

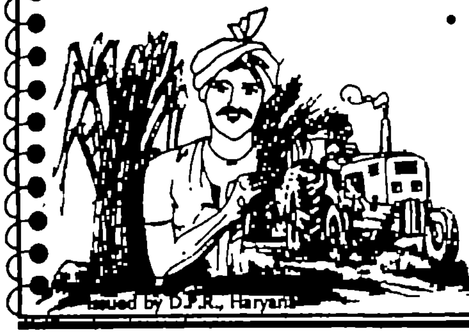
Today, we have legitimate claim to boast of our spectacular progress in various fields :



- Foodgrains production targetted to be increased to 102.40 lakh tonnes in 1992-93. A big Fruit and Vegetables Marketing Complex planned to be set up at Kundli in district Sonipat in the near future.
- First State in the country to give the highest support price of sugarcane of Rs 49 per quintal to its sugarcane growers.
- A production incentive scheme incorporating waiving of interest of last seven years on cooperative loans.
- Irrigation water for tails of all the distributaries. Optimum utilization of available water resources. Repair and desilting of all the canals and water-courses.
- Efforts are afoot to complete the SYL canal at the earliest.
- The limit of investment on rural industries enhanced from Rs 2 lakh to Rs 5 lakh for getting the subsidy.
- Only State in India to supply 55 per cent of its total power to the rural sector as against All India average of 25 per cent.
- Old-age pension to 7.50 lakh senior citizens of 60 years or above @ Rs 100 per month on rationalised economic basis. The pension of widows and handicapped also enhanced from Rs 75 to Rs 100 per month.
- Full protection ensured to rights and liberties of the Scheduled Castes, Backward Classes and Weaker Sections.
- Free education for girls upto graduation level. A drive for attaining cent per cent literacy and enrolment of school going children.
- Potable drinking water supply for all the villages and Public health amenities at all the religious and cultural places by March, 1992.
- Per capita health expenditure now increased to Rs. 69.50.
- All damaged roads being repaired on priority basis.



- Construction of 10,000 houses during the Silver Jubilee Year out of which 60 per cent for L.I.G. persons.



- Facilitate employment to at least one educated member in each family. Employment opportunities or training for employment to five lakh youth during the next five years.

On this auspicious occasion, I call upon one and all to contribute whole-heartedly towards the task of making a happy and prosperous Haryana, maintaining peace, national unity and integrity, communal harmony and amity.

Bhajan Lal
Chief Minister, Haryana

Issued by D.P.R., Haryana

Choosing the Man of the Year

H.Y. SHARADA PRASAD

Madhu Kishwar and Mrinal Pande might not approve of the gender chauvinism implicit in the idea of a Man of the Year, but they won't be able to fight this journalistic convention. *The Illustrated Weekly* has picked Prime Minister Narasimha Rao for the honour. *Time* magazine's choice is Ted Turner of the CNN for the reason that he has "influenced the dynamics of events by turning viewers in 150 countries into instant witnesses of history".

Time covers set a high standard for draftsmanship. The stories backing up the covers are absorbingly readable. Above all, the magazine takes care to see that its choices are not too predictable but have an element of surprise. In this our *India Today* and *Sunday*, ought to take a lesson from their prototype. I recall how V.P. Singh figured on several successive issues of *Sunday*, for example, when he was still believed to be a shaper of events.

Even *Time* is partial to the US Presidents. It is natural for journals of a country to be obsessed with its head of government. But in the case of *Time* there is the added belief that the US Presidents determine the world's agenda—even if they have to go as car salesmen to Japan. Also, for all its claim to being a journal with global coverage and readership, *Time* is really a house magazine of the United States.

A few days ago Chandan Mitra told us in *The Sunday Observer* that in his travels from Kanyakumari to Tanglang La in Ladakh, he had found that one of the factors contributing to Indian unity was the BBC. According to him, the BBC was listened to at every wayside eating place, and cited by every *dhaba* owner as authority for the authenticity of news. Whether we can go as far as saying: "No BBC, no India", many Americans believe that *Time* and other American journals, like Hollywood films, hold the world together. After all, is not *Time* published from several cities round the world and is the most reached-out-to journal in airport lounges and municipal reading rooms?

But let us give *Time* the credit that is its due. It is run by superb professionals who know how to create the sensation of omnipresence and omniscience—omniscience not only about political goings-on but about the worlds of science, art, films and fashion. *Time* prose, with its spicy crunchiness, is widely imitated. Everybody who reverses the order of noun and verb in a sentence thinks he is *Time* smart. But it is hard to beat *Time* in its capacity to ensure that fact-studded, opinion-stuffed prose is still racy. Rarely has *Time* exposed the hypocrites or belonged to that part of the Press which believes in afflicting the comfortable and comforting the afflicted. Its forte is not investigation but packaging. *Time* is like America—in a melting pot. Into its prose are thrown in the latest hearsay, the newest vogue words, many alliterative adjectives, and nouns used as verbs. The wonder is that this mixture is not a gooey mess but is light and crisp. *Time* is a triumph of the art of rewriting.

What the magazine does even better, not unconsciously, is the propagation of the American image and the American way of life. Where the State Department and CIA fail, *Time* succeeds.

Take the very choice of Ted Turner as the Man of the Year. Turner was not exactly popular with the US Government for the way he enabled President Saddam's face and voice to be seen and heard the world over. That very thing proved that he possessed the quality Americans admire most—enterprise.

But *Time* has canonised him not for his nonconformism but his ability to take advantage of the possibilities created by modern technology and built up a worldwide market for his product. I don't know whether Henry Ford ever made it to the *Time* cover. But Ted Turner's qualities are like Henry Ford's—not innovation as such, but exploitation.

To recall the *Time* citation, by making millions upon millions in a hundred and fifty countries instant witnesses of history, Turner has influenced the very dynamics of history. But does the second half of the formulation follow from the first? Did the fact that his mug was seen in a hundred and more countries give added confidence to Saddam? It is true that telecasting the question-hour of Lok Sabha makes MPs better dressed. But will zero hour be less tempestuous if that were telecast? It is true again that once the people of the former Soviet Union could receive satellite-cast television signals, the government there could not practise thought-control. But did the fact that people elsewhere could see their travails in any significant way embolden the East Europeans rise against the Red lords? Can they hope that tele-pictures of their shortages will really spur the nations of the world to go to their aid? To what extent does globalised television really affect *realpolitik*?

It is difficult to guess what would have given Ted Turner greater pride—marrying Jane Fonda or being hailed as the Man of the Year.

But what essentially is a Man of the Year? What are his qualifications and how is he to be identified? Even if we do not all subscribe to the Carlylean maxim that heroes it is who make history, did the *Time* Man of the Year "influence the dynamics of history" in 1991? Most people in the 150 countries that *Time* speaks of would say that that the title should belong to Boris Yeltsin (who was the *Newsweek's* cover for its first issue in the New Year). Mr Turner's CNN is good business, but Boris Yeltsin of CIS is bigger news.

A tip to *Time* for its 1992 Man of he Year. It should be Christopher Columbus posthumously. For, if he had not "discovered" the New World exactly 500 years ago, in 1492, where would *Time* be? Time past and Time future are both contained in Time present, to amend T.S. Eliot. ■

SUMIT: A Fruitful Odyssey

(Continued from page 4)

for him in preparing for the forthcoming British poll, but also to direct the activities of the new UN Secretary-General, Dr Boutros Butros-Ghali, who gave sufficient indication of his capacity as a seasoned diplomat. But he could not conceal his avowedly pro-West proclivities that had won him the coveted post.

Nevertheless, the summit did mirror the concerns and apprehensions of the Third World and that happened to be of no mean importance with India playing a prominent role in that exercise.

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IN bilateral talks Narasimha Rao's first meeting with Bush as India's Prime Minister, though brief, was marked by a reasonable degree of warmth. According to Narasimha Rao, the meeting was a success as India was able to put across its viewpoints on various issues more lucidly than before. There was a certain measure of similarity of views as reflected in Bush thanking the Indian Premier for having forged full diplomatic ties with Israel, and both leaders expressed satisfaction over the increasing economic ties between India and the US. However, differences over the NPT, the GATT and Super 301 were quite palpable. Narasimha Rao made it amply clear that the differences had to be acknowledged but they could be narrowed down—no question of conceding to a take-it-or-leave-it stand.

Narasimha Rao's talks with Yeltsin and Li Peng achieved a fair degree of success with the former agreeing to back India on Kashmir and explaining the reasons for his delay in visiting India (now he is due to come in either late September or early October this year) apart from discussing bilateral economic issues of vital concern. Li Peng conveyed China's shared perceptions with India on global issues of interest and agreed to hold the next meeting of the joint working group on the border at the level of the Foreign Secretaries in late February or early March.

The meeting with Major did not achieve anything tangible but Narasimha Rao was explicit enough to transmit India's position on the various subjects constituting the agenda of the summit meeting.

In a speech at the UN General Assembly in November 1961 Jawaharlal Nehru had called for a "new way of thinking" and a "new development of humanity" abjuring the old outmoded outlook. He had also said:

> The last years of difficulty and crisis have brought out more than ever before the importance of this organisation. Indeed one wonders what the world would be like if the United Nations ceased to be or did not function Therefore, it is of the highest importance that this great organisation should not only function but should function with effectiveness and with the support of the countries represented here.

Thirty years later, in a world substantially different from what it was at the end of 1961, P.V. Narasimha Rao, as the ninth Prime Minister of independent India, has left a distinct imprint on the UN Security Council making a valuable contribution towards reinforcing the UN system on the lines spelt out by his distinguished predecessor. This is particularly noteworthy in view of the complexities of the present-day scenario in the changing global environment.

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IF Narasimha Rao powerfully articulated India's concerns at the UN Security Council in the current world situation, his performance at the annual Davos international symposium organised by the World Economic Forum (WEF) was more striking as he projected, in a remarkably objective presentation, the essence of India and its problems both in the historical perspective as well as the present conditions.

Straying frequently from the prepared text—and thus giving greater substance to his observations—Narasimha Rao did not confine his speech to "global cooperation and mega competition", the theme of his presentation. Instead he dwelt on the positive and negative aspects of the present global scene as also India's role in the changing situation. He spoke of the politics of consensus his administration was trying to promote and traced it to the very ethos India had evolved over the ages.

> Consensus is not my innovation, not my discovery. It is the heritage of Indian culture It is the consequence of what India has stood for since millennia. The minority government has come in handy to me to return to the tradition from which we had strayed a little in the last few decades... You cannot rule by sheer majority. By that you can get votes but you cannot win the hearts of the people . Matters are much more complex than dividing them into black and white. There are so many shades of grey that you cannot possibly do without consensus.

These were words refreshingly new, words one is not used to hearing from Congress leaders in recent years. Suddenly one sensed the overwhelming influence on Narasimha Rao of the democratic spirit upheld by Jawaharlal Nehru.

That became more evident shortly thereafter. On the positive side of the balance of contemporary events, the end of the Cold War had resulted in a situation, he said, where issues were no longer overlaid by East-West confrontation. "There is now a greater chance of being true to our consciences than before," he affirmed. He referred to the massive upsurge of popular will across the globe bringing democracy and representative governments to the vast majority of the peoples. After a long time "democracy has attained a compulsive and almost universal validity" thus unfolding a "new and historic opportunity....to bring about a new structure of internaional relations in a free and uninhibited atmosphere, a structure which is equitable, democratic and responsive to the needs of humanity as they are actually found on the ground". Hence the prospect of putting into effect a "genuine system of collective security based on a more active role for the UN".

On the negative side, the continued existence of substantial numbers of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction was a source of tension.

> There is an attempt to perpetuate these arsenals in the hands of a few countries who justify this on the basis of the need for 'policing'. The concept of policing is not quite fail-safe and may become counterproductive in the long run. Besides, one must guard against East-West confrontation being transformed into a new type of North-South confrontation.

Referring to the break-up of the erstwhile Soviet Union, he traced the consequential spurt in nationalistic and sub-nationalistic trends in its different parts to the fact that such a development "has happened mostly in areas where the safety valve of democracy was not so far available". In contrast India with its democratic structure was able to contain and defuse such pressures.

> This would perhaps indicate one aspect of the efficacy of democracy in defusing tensions arising out of plurality. What the world has to scrupulously avoid is the temptation to encourage tendencies that can lead to chaos and confusion, political instability and economic crisis.

Of particular importance was his mention of the "danger of a new ideological orthodoxy replacing the old, imposing on our minds and prescribing rigid predetermined models for vastly different countries". Even while accepting the need for "a much wider role for the market principle, a congenial atmosphere for entrepreneurship, fewer controls on economic activity", he underscored that "for countries where poverty and destitution are pervasive, the state cannot absolve itself of the responsibility to involve in economic decision-making" adding: "It has to accept the responsibility to ensure a minimal degree of social welfare to its people." In Indian society an "individual is important but at the same time there is a strong sense of community interest as well". Hence his strong plea to let nations and societies to "determine their own specific socio-political and economic system even while asserting the universal values of democracy and humanism and acknowledging the greater efficiency of the market principle in most forms of economic activity".

The new wave of democracy, in his view, "will not be sustained if sufficient attention is not paid to development". He eloquently explained this point by asserting:

> Authoritarianism feeds on economic discontent; the foot-soldiers of fascism are drawn from the ranks of the desperate and the dispossessed. The democratic spirit is an universal value and aspiration, but strong and enduring political institutions are required to nurture and sustain this spirit. Economic crisis and social tensions cannot provide the environment needed for such institution-building. Development, therefore, becomes a precondition for sustaining democracy. It is in our own interests as democracies to keep development at the very centre of international concern and cooperation. It is not safe to assume that development will automatically follow democracy. This combination has to be consciously worked for and brought about.

This was an elaboration of the point he had made at the Caracas G-15 meet.

Characterising India as a "self-confident democracy", he said:

> The Indian mind is democractically oriented through and through. It has a combination of individualism and collective wisdom in action, which has been demonstrated for thousands of years. Whether it was a monarch or an emperor at the top, the Indian society did not allow its spirit of democracy and harmony to be lost down the centuries.

Thereafter he brought into focus the anonymity as well as autonomy of social life throughout Indian history.

> That has given us the assurance manifested in our repeated demonstration of an ability to absorb shocks and crisis and emerge with political institutions and commitment to democracy, even stronger.. What is important is that our democratic institutions have been able to contain such conflicts and provide the means for their resolution through the political process.

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ON the Indian economic experiment he gave a highly realistic assessment of the country's achievement of self-sufficiency in food with a modest surplus in most years.

> When you consider that India has a population of 840 million people, that is no mean achievement, although highbrow economists may not acknowledge it and in any event, success does not attract as much attention as failure.

He further underlined that the self-sufficiency was attained with the low consumption pattern of the bulk of the populace but stressed that such a pattern had existed for centuries at a stretch. This too was reflective of the Prime Minister's wise objectivity.

With the growth of a skilled and experienced scientific and technical manpower in the country and the attainment of a degree of maturity and sophistication the economy was "naturally ready, willing and even eager to accept the challenge of the marketplace".

Seen against this backdrop, Narasimha Rao asserted, the economic liberalisation process "is the logical continuation of the strategy of development adopted by India". The process would take the country to a new and higher level of growth.

> The decisions we took were well-considered. The process will continue and is irreversible precisely because of the background I have explained. The people of India have accepted these changes as necessary and the results of the parliamentary by-elections in November last year removed all doubts on that score.

He was confident that "with its vast and growing market India can become a powerful engine for the growth of the Asian as well as the global economy". This, he underlined, "is of great significance at a time when growth in several developed economies appears to be decelerating and access to their markets is becoming more difficult".

The Indian people's passionate attachment to the unity of the country alongside democracy was a testimony of their wisdom, he said, adding:

> The Indian polity does face challenges from terrorism, religious fundamentalism and separatist tendencies. However, these challenges have not overwhelmed the country and our political institutions have demonstrated sufficient flexibility and capacity for innovation to meet

these challenges.

Reiterating that economic reforms would continue and accelerate, he did not hide the problems "in the short run": constraints due to inadequate infrastructure, the persisting rise in population and slow progress in eradicating poverty, illiteracy and disease. However, pledging to open up economic activity to the extent possible, he said:

> I believe that your partnership with India in its march towards development would be mutually rewarding.

Then followed a series of questions. Narasimha Rao handled them with effortless ease, his repartees being greeted with warm applause. For example, in reply to a query as to whether India would give investment protection guarantee, he said:

> If you mean by it nationalisation of foreign companies, we have enough of nationalised industries, we don't want to add to them. There will be no nationalisation of foreign industries.

Again, on the issue of 100 per cent ownership to foreign companies, he said: "We will welcome those who are willing to help us in creating the infrastructure in a big way." But if there was a choice between setting up a fertiliser factory and installing a lipstick producing firm, his preference will be for the former because we need it. "My preference and concessions will be according to my primary needs," he underlined. India was a huge market which would become evident just by skimming its surface, and yet the objective of the government, he emphasised, was to enhance the purchasing power of the people. He repeatedly stressed the need to plan for 840 million people, not 150 million. The message was clear: planning for the top layer of the populace as had been done in the recent past was not the perspective of the present Indian Government.

In this sense he was able to blend the new with the old. So effective were his answers to such queries as cutting down budget deficit, and the debureaucratisation of the polity that Prof Klaus Schwab, the WEF founder-President, who was chairing the session and had earlier complimented Narasimha Rao for having uncaged the Indian tiger, concluded the session with the words:

> India has arrived. It is no longer in an ideological strait-jacket. It has the right Prime Minister at the right time.

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THE symposium at Davos, the picturesque Swiss ski resort, attracts a large number of prominent figures from business and industry the world over. No doubt Narasimha Rao's frank, candid and straightforward remarks left a highly favourable impression on the participants and several British industrialists among others said they were delighted at the new Indian approach. In contrast to Pakistan Premier Nawaz Sharif's lacklustre address—although he also spoke at length on opening up the Pak economy—that had drawn a lukewarm reaction, Narasimha Rao was able to evoke a wider and warmer response.

Yet the participants had their own priorities, the focus being on the various constituents of the Commonwealth of Independent States, Eastern Europe and South Africa (President de Klerk, ANC leader Nelson Mandela and the Inkatha chief Buthulezi were all invited to Davos) while Mexico and Brazil too were getting more attention than India and Pakistan. One can be hardly blind to this ground reality.

Nonetheless, the gathering found several CIS constituents like Ukraine, Russia and Kazakhstan displaying considerable interest in promoting ties with India. At a dinner hosted by Indian industrialists assembled at Davos in honour of the Ukrainian head of state, Leonid Kravchuk, the latter made an earnest appeal to Indian business to invest generously in his republic. He had a useful meeting with Narasimha Rao. Alexei Fedorov, an adviser to the Russian Vice-President, Alexander Rutskoi, was frank enough to mention the difficulties in the rupee-rouble exchange and assail Indian politicians for their lack of comprehension of Indo-Russian relations, but was confident of the two governments capacity to amicably resolve the bilateral problems to forge a new kind of enduring relationship bereft of the past understanding based on the Cold War approach.

The Davos visit of Narasimha Rao was punctuated by a meeting with Nawaz Sharif that apparently turned out to be a routine affair with India reiterating its concern over repeated Pak interference in J&K and Punjab. Narasimha Rao did quite a lot of plain-speaking referring in particular to the Pakistan-to-Kashmir march threat by the JKLF. Nawaz Sharif at a joint press conference after the talks was exceedingly sweet and suggested that 1992 be made the "year of reconciliation" in Indo-Pak relations. But within less than 48 hours the Pakistan Premier called for a Pakistan-wide bandh on Kashmir. Narasimha Rao, however had made his point: the ball was in Pakistan's court to improve Indo-Pak ties.

◆

THE imponderables are definitely high, the odds quite heavy. And yet despite the difficulties before India in the changing world scenario Narasimha Rao confidently presented the Indian policies—both foreign and domestic—in the two gatherings at New York and Davos drawing encomiums from informed public opinion not taken in by temporary flashes of intelligence but impressed by maturity, experience and sincerity all of which the Indian Premier displayed in abundance.

Narasimha Rao has by his openness and fortright elaboration of the Indian viewpoints once again enhanced India's stature in the international arena. This outcome of the trip to New York and Davos will help the country to reap rich dividends in the coming days even if the global atmosphere turns unfavourable due to a conspiracy of circumstances. A fruitful odyssey, indeed. ■

(February 5)

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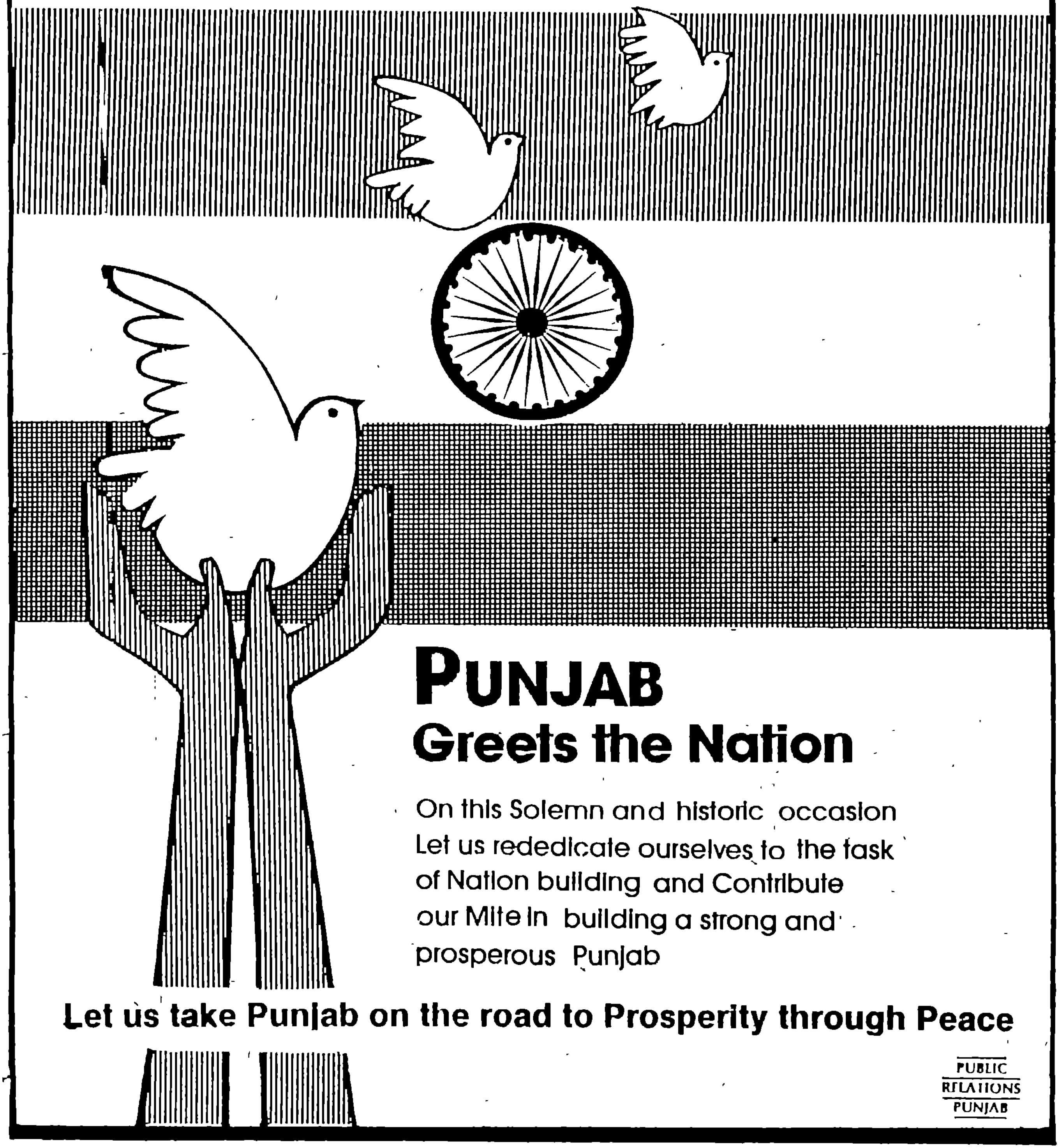

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POLITICAL NOTEBOOK

The New Challenge

The very fact that elections have taken place in Punjab after 57 months of President's Rule is in itself an important development in the light of the grim realities in that trouble-torn State. It marks the assertion of the democratic process because no matter how weighty the arguments are in favour of stalling elections, postponement of the poll exercise always calls into question the essence of the parliamentary democracy this country has opted for itself since its independence from foreign yoke.

Regardless of the outcome of these elections for 115 Assembly and 13 Lok Sabha seats in the State, reports from Punjab indicate a peaceful poll and a very low turnout of voters. Against the background of the conditions prevailing in Punjab this turnout need not be scoffed at. That a part of the electorate has exercised the right to vote in spite of the pall of fear, especially in the Punjab countryside, is of no mean significance.

Even if these elections have been held under the shadow of the gun and apprehensions of largescale ballot tampering, the efforts to organise the poll have not been in vain precisely because these endeavours by and large conformed to the mood of the Punjab populace although a very large section of voters chose to keep away on account of a variety of factors. These factors barely need elaboration. The terrorist-secessionist threat manifest not only in the 48 hour bandh the militant groups called on February 18 but also in their declaration of "curfew" all over the State till the scheduled end of polling on February 19 alongside the *fatwa* that "violation of the curfew will result in a death sentence" constituted a big deterrent to the voter turnout. The trend of polling shows that while the Akalis boycotted the poll and the Congress-I hardly campaigned, confining themselves to indoor meetings, it was left only to the Left, the BJP and the BSP to risk open campaigning. To overlook this in any analysis of the Punjab elections would be a costly error.

There is, however, no gainsaying that the Congress-I Government at the Centre has, even while carrying out its assurance of holding elections and restoring the democratic process in the State, given sufficient testimony of again mishandling the Punjab problem. Not only did it not strive its utmost to reverse the approach of the various Akali factions to the Punjab elections, it did not care to take active steps in the direction of redressing the principal grievances of the people that have sought to alienate public opinion in the State from the national mainstream, and thus imparted a further fillip to the secessionists' nefarious

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designs. Despite the Prime Minister's public announcement that the Centre would implement the provisions of the Rajiv-Longowal Accord, the statement was not followed up by any concrete action to that effect before the poll. Nothing was done to assuage the feelings of those who justifiably demand stringent punishment for the perpetrators of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots in the aftermath of Indira Gandhi's assassination. At the same time measures to suppress dissent, to browbeat those peacefully urging the public for poll boycott, and to indulge in all forms of electoral malpractices to assist the Congress-I struck at the roots of the ethos and values the world's largest democracy has all along upheld.

However, while decrying these one cannot possibly take a negative approach to the Punjab poll. This journal has all along stood for the speedy revival of the democratic process in the State by holding elections despite heavy odds.

The Punjab poll is a lesson for both the Centre and the Akali leadership. While the Centre must realise that it can no longer behave in the same irresponsible manner it sought to tackle the Punjab problem in the last few years, the Akali leaders must engage in some self-introspection. They have always stood for the restoration of an elected government in Punjab. But when the time came to elect such a government they needlessly called for poll boycott thereby refusing to shoulder political responsibility, something not expected of the experienced leadership of a mature political organisation like the Akali Dal.

Both the Centre and the State Government that is to be sworn in have onerous responsibilities to bear. The Centre must honour, in letter and spirit, its commitment—made by no less a person than the Prime Minister himself—to implement all the provisions of the Rajiv-Longowal Accord. Since this did not happen before the poll, it is imperative to do so now that an elected government is taking office in Punjab. And the elected State Government's priority task should be to help bring back the militants to our democratic polity.

Punjab today poses a greater challenge than ever before for the political leadership of the country. There is no time to lose. If the situation in Punjab can be stabilised, its impact is bound to be felt in the Kashmir Valley as well.

Not only will such a development demonstrate to the world the durability of India's democratic edifice, it will prove once again that the political process alone—and not administrative measures or executive fiat—can help to resolve such sensitive problems even if they are aggravated by direct interference from across the border.

February 20 S.C.

COMMENTARY

By Decree Alone

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

With barely a week to go before the Budget session of the Lok Sabha, there is naturally considerable trepidation about what's in store for the common man. All the indications have made it abundantly clear that it may be a harsh Budget, at least for those in the middle and lower income groups, who constitute the overwhelming majority in our society.

A peculiar feature of the dramatic economic reforms of the last eight months has been that practically every major item has been sprung as a surprise upon the country, without preparing the public by explanations and discussions, not to speak of debates.

In fact, whatever debates have taken place were mainly after the decrees were announced and not as an exercise to psychologically prepare the public. One has to concede to the critics of the government's reforms that they have been more active than their advocates, and it has been mainly at their initiative that the government has in some cases been compelled to respond. As one looks back, there was only one jamboree-like gathering of economists right at the very beginning which was noteworthy for the generalities uttered in support of what's become a cliché today—namely, integrating the Indian economy into the global course. No details were given about the design and the pattern of the economic reforms in the offing.

Although the Finance Minister was at the beginning vociferous in claiming that his reforms packet was entirely *swadeshi* and not a Fund-Bank model, it was later found that his prescriptions have been largely dictated by the IMF conditionalities. The persistent tardiness in the government's release of the correspondence with the IMF and the copycat submission to the IMF *dikat* as revealed in that disclosure, has led the public to believe that whatever the Finance Minister's personal credentials as an economist, there is no gainsaying that he and his team have totally identified themselves with the Fund-Bank position, without the least originality on their part. There were many distinguished people in the government in the past who were inclined to the IMF line, but none of them carried out so totally, to the very dot, the IMF behests.

Leaving aside this bankruptcy in the thinking on economic issues in the government, what is strange is that there has been no effort at conditioning even the ruling Congress party, not to speak of the public at large, about the entire packet of proposed reforms, and the implications of each of the measures. Obviously, nobody in the government or in the Opposition questions the need for economic reforms in principle. But there are widespread misgivings about the impact of the specific reforms programme of the present government on different sections of the people, particularly the lower income groups.

The overall impression so far created by the government's economic measures is that these will widen the existing disparities to a point which is likely to generate unrest that may have serious social consequences. This is a question which the Finance Minister seems to evade answering all the time. The Prime Minister has been talking all this time that the new process is irreversible, but little has so far been done to enlighten the public about the totality of the actual reforms and what these are supposed to bring about for the country, and for different sections of the people living in this country.

This is by no means an unreasonable complaint. When in the early fifties, Jawaharlal Nehru's government decided to go in for industrialisation in the classical Industrial Revolution model of first building the heavy industries, he assigned it to Mahalanobis to openly interact with leading economists in the country together with many distinguished figures from different countries of the world so that there could emerge out of their collective wisdom a model suitable for a developing country of our complexity and diversity and level of development.

This debate was purposely kept on for nearly two years, before the Second Plan-frame was produced and that Plan-frame was widely debated in many forums apart from Parliament before the specific measures were enacted. The entire intelligentsia of the country—not merely a band of economists—were involved in this nationwide debate.

Compare that exercise with the present one under Manmohan Singh. On every issue, the government has been fighting shy of talking to the public in detail. There is a conspicuous lack of any interaction whatsoever. Even Ministers are not clear what to say or not to say. The distance between Mahalanobis to Manmohan is the difference between open, democratic debates and the abject carrying out of the Fund-Bank orders.

◆

ONE Minister talks of the rupee being soon made a convertible currency. The present writer has asked as many as four fairly senior Ministers who denied any knowledge of such a move, while one of them totally discounted such a possibility in the near future. The point to note is that the ruling establishment itself is kept in a state of ignorance on such a major issue as bringing structural reforms in the economy of the country.

Coming to the more specific questions, there has been an equally conspicuous absence of any effort at elaborating, for instance, the Exit policy. For one thing, the Finance Minister chose to announce it categorically, not in the country but in the assembly of Fund-Bank bigwigs at Bangkok. Since then, the trade unions and others concerned with labour have been asking the government to spell it out. But the government has throughout been fighting shy of explaining its position. When cornered, the Ministers promptly say that nobody would be thrown out of job.

What sort of Manmohan Exit policy is this that nobody would lose his job? Such a mystery needs to be cleared up particularly in a democracy like ours. One can of course understand the government's predicament and consequent hesitation in announcing any policy that would be patently unpopular. But if the government is in no position to muster public support for a policy, would it not land itself in a situation of large-scale discontent which ultimately would strike at its own precarious stability.

Accountability is essential in a democracy. The Finance Minister confidently assured only seven months ago that there would be no double-digit inflation. But now inflation, by official calculation, is reported to have gone beyond 14 per cent.

In these intervening months, nothing extraordinary has happened that could have upset the Finance Minister's estimate of last July. Then, does he not owe an explanation to the public what went wrong, why his Ministry had gone so wrong?

This is not just a simple question of a ministerial lapse. If at such a crucial moment, the Finance Minister can make such a serious mistake, what confidence would the public and Parliament have on his being given such a major assignment as overhauling the entire economy? Are we in safe hands? Such a question will neither be unfair nor far-fetched.

It is all very well to talk loudly about integration into the global economic trend, but to carry out such a gigantic task while maintaining one's economic independence, requires competence of the highest order—not those borrowed from the Fund-Bank storehouse, which has a rather unsavoury record of ruining many of the developing economies. Above all, such an undertaking has to be in the open, by patiently explaining to the public all its implications, and enlist their trust and confidence. Otherwise Yeltsin-like anarchy will destroy the fabric of our democracy. ■

(This is reproduced from *The Economic Times* with minor additions by the author.)

Economy: Time to Change the Pilot

RAJESH MAHAPATRA

About a week before Dr Manmohan Singh presented his Budget in Parliament last year, a journalist in a leading economic daily wrote: "Pilots would probably understand what India is into now: the fourth stage of take-off. There is no turning back...If everything goes just so, India would well become a rather a nicer place to live in." Further adding a note of caution, he wrote: "The problem is that the room for manoeuvre is tiny and the margin for error large."

In the subsequent days to follow, the Budget was presented, the much acclaimed Industrial Policy Resolution tabled, and half a dozen policy measures that marked the historic break from the past were pushed through. India was, indeed, into the fourth stage of take-off. And a bit of luck has favoured not all but some. Prima facie, it now seems that the above efforts have resulted in significantly improving the foreign exchange reserves, thereby containing, if not overcoming, the BOP crisis in the short run, putting negative speculations regarding capital flight to rest and resolving "the crisis of confidence in the immediate context". All these, however, were not achieved without any quid pro quo. The immense social and economic cost involved had to be borne (and is being borne) by the people at large, more particularly by those in the lower rungs of the socio-economic ladder.

It is being suggested (rather propagated) by planners and policy-makers, bureaucrats, the media, the big business—who of late have started talking about poverty alleviation, spread of education, not to mention a pollution-free environment in the interests of the poor—and the political leadership of this country that opting for such a trade-off in the short run was in the greater interests of the people.

◆

SIX months have passed by since the last Budget was presented. In the North Block hectic activities are once again on. The Finance Minister will be delivering his second Budget speech on the 29th of this month. A fresh package of promises and tall claims is already in the pipeline. Before reflecting on these Budget related claims it is necessary to have an objective assessment of the government's performance, rather the short run yields of the IMF package, which incidentally happened to be identical with our policy-makers' understanding of the crisis of the Indian economy.

On July 24, 1991, while delivering his Budget speech in Parliament, the Finance Minister outlined three major objectives. First, the Budget would reduce the fiscal deficit to 6.5 per cent of the gross domestic product; secondly, the Budget was to be growth oriented—the real GDP growth rate being projected at a modest four per cent; and finally, the Budget was not to be inflationary in its impact. To top it all, he prefaced his Budget by calling it an attempt towards "adjustment with a human face". The developments in the past six months, however, point to the contrary.

News of price rise hit the headlines every second day. The average rate of inflation during this period was of the order of 14 per cent—reaching its peak of 16.3 per cent in the month of September and refusing to decline below 12 per cent in the winter months when prices usually show a seasonal decline. Though officials in the government would like to take their cue from the fluctuations in the wholesale price index (WPI), reports from the buyers' market suggest that the common man has to buy his essentials at a price 30 to 40 per cent dearer than before. A host of factors, ranging from increased transportation costs to issue, price hikes has contributed to creating a persistent inflationary pressure. Most of it is on account of the rise in foodgrain prices. Following a cut in the fertiliser subsidy, the government hiked up the procurement prices—the third in a row since 1988. This generated inflationary expectations in the foodgrains market. Speculative forces were at work in a big way. In fact, a Cabinet note, reportedly circulated in late December, attributed the inflationary pressure to a vast increase in the "proxy holding power" of the farm sector. In order to maximise their speculative gains, the grain traders, rather than take delivery of grain at the time of harvest, were asking the farmers to hold on to the stocks till a future date.

At this juncture the government should have taken immediate and effective steps to counter the

(Continued on page 34)

GATT as Instrument of Re-colonisation

SURENDRA J. PATEL

BACKGROUND TO URUGUAY ROUND

The rich countries had for two centuries dominated the international scene. Following the tidal wave of colonial liberation in the post-Second World War period, the developing countries organised themselves as the Group of 77. They initiated in the United Nations and the UNCTAD a wide series of negotiations with the West aimed at establishing a New International Economic order (NIEO). I need not go into the details of all the initiatives that the Group of 77, as it came to represent the developing countries, launched in that Golden Age (1966-1980) of the South's entry on the world scene. That was the Age we could be proud of. But public memories are so short that there is a danger of forgetting them altogether.

This background is pertinent to what is happening now. The Uruguay Round is in a sense an act of turning the negotiations on the NIEO upside down. The developing countries had gone through a disastrous decade during the 1980s. They had been burdened by falling export prices caused by recessions in the West, severe balance of payments crisis, budgetary deficits and heavy external debt. They were forced to borrow from both the IMF and the World Bank, and submit to their structural adjustment programmes. (What a historical hijacking even of names this was, since the very notion of structural change and structuralism were the contributions of the developing countries.) This, however is not the place to discuss the South's crisis, though I intend to take that up in another context.

Taking advantage of the difficulties of the South, of its despair and disarray, rich countries, like proverbial moneylenders, seized the initiation in the 1980s. They opened a new front by slamming the door on the North-South negotiations to establish the NIEO.

It was the period when the growing movement towards accommodation and development co-operation between the North and the South was destroyed. The Third World was in a disarray. The rich countries started their own offensive. They changed both the stage and the substance of the North-South negotiations. Over 50 countries, desperate for foreign loans, had to accept the IMF's and the World Bank's structural adjustment programmes.

It was against this background that the conservative governments in the West launched the Uruguay Round of Negotiations in the GATT. The United Nations and the UNCTAD, the universal fora for the North-South, were dumped. And the GATT, an obscure organisation till then, was resurrected. The GATT was upto that time a small, sleepy organisation, housed in its make-shift quarters in the shadow of the UNCTAD and the Palais des Nations, was made by the West the central body for most far-reaching negotiations.

It is important to recall that while this shift in the stage was being made, the North-South negotiations had come a long way. The revision of the Paris Convention to bend it to serve the development interests of the South countries, the Code of Conduct on technology and the code for the transnational corporations had made considerable progress towards their completion. But the United States led the way for the Uruguay Round of Negotiations, which effectively slammed the door on all aspects of restructuring the global economic relations between the rich and the poor countries.

The stage was changed from the United Nations system to the clubs of the rich countries—the GATT and the IMF and the World Bank. The United States spearheaded the drive to negotiate in the GATT a vast package of issues, which were mostly out of the competence of the GATT. In place of its earlier somewhat boring work on tariff reductions, the GATT was now made the centre-piece to re-establish more firmly—and not to

Dr Patel was the Director of the Technology Division of the UNCTAD (1969-1984). He is now a Visiting Professor at the Sardar Patel Institute of Economic and Social Research, Ahmedabad. This contribution is taken from the statement he presented to the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Arthur Dunkel's Draft of the Final Act on Uruguay Round of GATT Negotiations, January 1992.

change—the earlier unfair old order. The GATT was chosen because the developing countries did not have the advantage of being organised there, as in the United Nations system, as the Group of 77. Moreover, the GATT offered leverage for pressure by the West, as it could use the GATT's provisions for trade sanctions across the board, including cross retaliation.

In the name of trade, and the over-extended "trade distortions", the GATT under the Uruguay Round of Negotiations was to deal with a very wide basket of subjects, such as agriculture, commodity trade with special emphasis on textiles, investment measures, intellectual property rights, trade in services, new rules for the GATT, and the creation of a multilateral trade organisation.

Four years of negotiations upto the autumn of 1991 in the GATT had left many issues unresolved. It was then that Arthur Dunkel, the Director-General of the GATT, presented his draft of the Final Act of the Uruguay Round, as a package on a "take-it-or-leave-it" basis.

This background is of critical importance for assessing the present stage and the substance of the negotiations. In conclusion, it can thus be seen that there was a change in the stage of the play—from the United Nations to the trinity of the GATT, the IMF and the World Bank. There was at the same time a change in the very substance of the play. That Draft Final Act of Arthur Dunkel is not for promoting development cooperation and accommodating the entry of the developing countries on the world stage. Instead, it is aimed at establishing insidious control over the decision-making processes in the countries of the South. That is, now the process of "re-colonisation" has begun.

II

DUNKEL DRAFT TEXT (DDT): SELECTED ISSUES

The subject coverage in the Dunkel Draft Text (DDT) is so wide that I will have to be severely selective. I will take up agriculture and intellectual property rights in some detail because they affect the very vital sectors of our economy—agriculture and industry. Other subjects will then have to be discussed only in a summary fashion.

(1) Agricultural Development

The Dunkel Draft Text will pose some very serious problems to our future agricultural development. An overwhelming majority of our people live in the countryside. Agriculture for them is not merely a means of survival. It is indeed a way of life for them. No wonder our government has always attached a very high priority to overcoming our food insecurity. Import dependence under the US PL 480 was to be rapidly replaced by the development of our agriculture. We therefore pioneered the 'Green Revolution'. Agricultural-output rose three-fold. India became a model for the agricultural development of the South countries.

How was this vast upsurge of agriculture promoted? The government took the initiative. Our research and development network was set in motion. The Indian Council of Agricultural Research was activated. Generation after generation of new varieties of high-yielding seeds were developed. Input packages, combining seeds, fertilisers and pesticides were evolved. The government played an active role in organising the research, in extending irrigation, in providing credit facilities on easy terms for agricultural inputs and for the purchase of agricultural machinery and implements. It gave price supports and adequate marketing facilities. It gave the much-needed subsidies for irrigation, water, power, fertilisers, pesticides, farm equipment, etc. so that our agriculture would prosper. This is old history, but it is recalled to appreciate how the DDT will affect our future development.

If the Dunkel Draft Text is accepted, all this will be undermined. Our network of past policies will have to be scrapped or seriously modified. This will include subsidies for irrigation, water, power, fertilisers, pesticides, credits, price-support schemes, and building up of buffer stocks. Our Public Distribution System will have to be seriously altered. India's domestic market will have to be opened up for imports of food products from outside.

Not only that, the Dunkel Draft proposes that seeds, plants and biogenetic substances and innovations will have to be patented, or given patent-like protection. Genetically modified living organisms will have to be patented. Germ plasm, orginating mostly in the developing countries, will be privatised, developed and patented by external multinational corporations. India would have to import seeds, plants and all the advances flowing from the new biogenetic research. The costs of such imports, imposed by the giant multinational corporations, will be high. Such dependence in the vital area of agricultural development will have very serious consequences.

The DDT favours the interests of the developed countries. It does not make any distinction between the interests of the rich countries and the development needs of the Third World countries. The subsidies in the Western countries are intended to raise farm incomes and build up unmarketable surpluses of food supplies. They then give more subsidies to sell the surpluses in the world market. In the developing countries, the position is different. Their need, in contrast, is to raise food output to feed their people, to attain a degree of food security to tide over poor harvests in times of bad weather. Their need is to establish a network of Public Distribution System to supply food at reasonable prices to the vast majority of their people.

Dunkel's Draft shows no concern for India's need to assure its agricultural development. Its acceptance will sweep away all the policies and institutional structures which we have built at great sacrifices since independence to ensure our agricultural progress.

(2) Trade-related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS)

The GATT had never seriously dealt with intellectual property rights. The legitimate fora for these were the UNCTAD and the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO). It should be recalled here that as early as 1961, India had joined Brazil in calling for a close examination of the adverse effects the patent system may have on the development of the Third World countries. There was much subsequent discussion in the UNCTAD on the need to change the patent system so as to serve the development interests of the South. India took the lead and changed in 1970 its old patent law, the early origin of which dated back to 1858—a 'gift' given by the British rulers a few months after the suppression of the insurrection of 1857.

After independence, the adverse impacts of that patent law were closely examined by two Committies—the Justice Bakshi Takchand Committee (1948) and the Justice Rajgopal Ayyanger Committee (1957). They found that the patent system granted import monopolies to foreign enterprises. After the reports of these two Committees, there were long discussions in the Joint Select Committees of Parliament and in both the Houses. Two decades of intensive discussions had taken place before the Indian Patents Act of 1970 was adopted. In many ways, this Act was rather modest in the changes it proposed. But soon it became a model for other developing countries. Agrentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Egypt and several other developing countries framed their patent laws on the Indian model. Whenever I visited the countries of the South in all the three developing continents, I felt proud to receive vicariously compliments from these countries to India on its new patent law.

It is important, therefore, to recall the main features of this law which has become India's national heritage based on a national consensus arrived after a long consideration. Its main features may be briefly summarised here:

i) The Patent Act (1970) changed the very objective of the patent system. No longer was it to serve only the external interests. The new patent system was to become an instrument of our own national development.

ii) Patents were to be granted for promoting their use in the national production system, and not merely for granting import monopolies.

iii) In order to promote the use of foreign patents in our country, the system of compulsory licences was strengthened (Section 84).

iv) A novel system of licence of right (Article 87) was introduced to overcome the weaknesses and the enormous delays involved in obtaining a compulsory licence. Provisions were also made for the revocation of patent grants (Article 89). The Patents Act changed the very operation of the patent system in several ways, for instance:

   a) It excluded from patentability a wide variety of items in order to safeguard public interest, for example, agriculture, food, medicines or drugs, chemical products, atomic energy.

   b) Most important was its provision to exclude from patent grant products resulting from chemical processes. Process, and not product, patent became as was the practice in all newly developing countries (NIC) of the nineteenth century, the established norm.

   c) It introduced a system of variable duration for the patent grant ranging from five to 15 years.

   d) It made the registration fee for the patent progressively proportionate to the economic importance of the patented innovation.

Soon after the establishment of the Indian Patents Act, the multinational corporations of the West mounted strong pressure on the Government of India to join the Paris Convention, and to amend the Patents Act.

The Dunkel Draft on intellectual property rights (TRIPS) wholly changes the very substance and the framework of the Indian Patents Act. Instead of strengthening our scientific and technological capabilities, it moves towards scuttling them. Instead of promoting self-reliance (Gandhiji's call for *swadeshi*), it will open the way for unlimited control by multinational corporations of our domestic market. Instead of giving us freedom to exclude certain sectors from patentability, it will force us to patent everything, including agricultural and biogenetic innovations. Instead of including only processes in patent grant, it will force us to extend patent protection also to products. Instead of reducing the duration of the patents, it will extend their term to 20 years. Instead of strengthening the system of compulsory licensing and licence of right, it will practically abolish them. Instead of encouraging the use of patents at home, it will establish import monopolies. In short, instead of safeguarding our public interest, it will serve private interests of foreign corporations.

The patent law which helped our pharmaceutical and chemical development and formed the basis of our advances through our own research and development system, will have to be altered fundamentally. In consequence, the prices of drugs and pharmaceuticals, currently the lowest in the world, will sky-rocket. Several eminent jurists have said that the acceptance of the Dunkel Draft will also require even changing our constitutional provisions. That is the reason why all political parties and as many as 250 Members of Parliament—indeed a working majority in the current session—have come out against altering the Indian Patents Act (1970).

3. *Trade-related Investment Measures (TRIMS)*

The Dunkel Draft Text calls for foreign investors to be given the same treatment as our national investors. In legal terms, they are to be given national treatment. There will be no obligation on them to use our domestic resources, materials, semi-manufactured products, technical skills and managerial personnel. Nor will we be able to regulate the flow of dividends, and control transfer pricing through which the multinational corporations drain away foreign exchange resources of the developing countries. Many of our Acts (FERA and MRTP), for instance, will have to be changed, or scrapped.

Let me just paint a picture of what could happen in India. I do not intend to be apocalyptic, but the scenario is not wholly unreal. Through structural adjustments imposed by the IMF and the World Bank, our public sector units are being privatised. In addition, we will have to follow a strict exit policy for a large number of our public as well as private enterprises which are sick (incidentally,

[redacted]

in India could well force India into a situation under which consortia of the Western countries could, for $10-20 billion, establish dominant control in most of India's industrial units. $10-20 billion at the devalued rate of exchange would come to roughly 25 to 50 thousand crores of rupees, an amount which is quite high for us as it is equal to 75 to 150 per cent of India's exports and to six to 12 per cent of its GDP, but it could well be almost equal to the total of the industrial assets which are traded on India's stock markets. Therefore, 25-50 thousand crores of rupees is a huge sum for India. But $10-20 billion is not so large a sum for any combination of the foreign banks and corporations. We need not forget the sharp public concerns in Europe at the invasion of American capital in the early post-War years; nor should we overlook the deep American sentiments aroused recently against the invasion of Japanese capital in their country.

4. *Services*

The Dunkel Draft on services opens up a wholly new avenue in world trade for controlling our economy. Upto now, only trade in goods was regulated by international conventions. There are no universal rules or disciplines for trade in services. The United States has led the drive to establish such rules for services mainly because it wants to promote the entry of its service corporations in banking, insurance, telecommunications, travel, transport, etc. in foreign countries. In these areas the US corporations have a distinct comparative advantage. Such entry will at the same time undermine the public utilities and national enterprises which have played a central role in the developing countries (and indeed in Western Europe). The Dunkel Draft would force India to open its domestic markets for penetration by the multinational corporations. The entry of their service corporations will bring in its train the imports of a package of equity capital, other equipment and other goods.

While forcing us to open our doors to the foreign service companies, the Dunkel Draft is silent on areas in which India has a comparative advantage, for example, in consultancy services, in professional skills and even in labour services. It is argued that these areas are regulated by the immigration laws of the developed countries.

We may examine them briefly. There will be no serious opening up of the Western markets in textiles during the transitional period of some 10 years. The Dunkel Draft postpones any serious opening up of trade in textiles to the end of the transitional period. Even then, it offers only an uncertain liberalisation in early twentyfirst century. If this is offered as a concession, it is nothing less than a joke on the negotiators from the developing countries.

6. Multilateral Trade Organisation (MTO)

The most scandalous provision in the Dunkel document is the creation of a Multilateral Trade Organisation (MTO). This institution in collaboration with the IMF and the World Bank will have the power to review our trade policies and practices. It will be empowered to impose retaliations and cross sanctions. It will no longer be necessary for the United States to use Special 301 for bilateral pressure of sanctions. The GATT will take this task over and universalise it—applicable to all countries.

The GATT will thus be added as another instrument for enforcing the IMF and the World Bank conditionalities for structural adjustment. The Dunkel Draft indeed goes even further. It provides for the GATT's collaboration with the IMF and the World Bank in promoting, monitoring and enforcing a market based growth strategy for India. The trinity (IMF, World Bank and GATT) will then take charge of our policies for domestic development. Instead of home rule, we will have foreign rule—in a word, 're-colonisation'. These three will undermine our sovereignty. The decision-making processes for India's development will be externalised, even when some of the measures are introduced in an Indian voice. The age of colonial liberation will be replaced by the hegemony of the developed countries.

III

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

In conclusion, I wish to underline that there is no basis on which the government can accept the Dunkel proposals without serious modifications in them. The National Working Group on Patent Laws has mobilised our scientists, economists, lawyers, journalists, Members of Parliament, leaders of political parties, non-governmental organisations and industrial bodies. They have asked the government repeatedly to take the people, Parliament, the political parties and the press into confidence. To all these demands, the government has so far turned a deaf ear. The country is in a disarray.

The silence of the government raises some very fundamental doubts. It would seem as if the government believes that it will be able to accept the Dunkel proposals without strong domestic opposition. This will not be the case. It is time that the government informs the GATT in no uncertain terms that India cannot accept the document on a 'take-it-or-leave-it' basis. It should specifically indicate the areas of India's disagreement with the Dunkel Draft Text. These will have to be renegotiated beecause they adversely affect the very livelihood and development interests of our people. India is too large a country to be dictated to by foreign pressures, imposing mechanical deadlines decided by the calendar of American elections. Our long-term interests cannot be staked on such a flimsy time-table. Ours is a large sovereign democratic country. We are a part of the international community of nations. We must therefore call for an intensive national debate on all the issues, both in Parliament and outside.

Time is of the utmost importance. It is running out. The people, parliamentarians, the political parties and the press are all becoming restless. There is a massive upsurge of resentment against the exercise of pressure from external institutions—the IMF, the World Bank and the GATT. Our own government is echoing the voice of these outsiders. It is becoming a prisoner of these pressures, insensitive to the people's concerns. The GATT has now joined the IMF and the World Bank. We therefore urge the government to make it clear that the people of India, and not the external trinity, are in charge here at home. ■

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Unchaining the Reserve Bank

J.D. SETHI

The autonomy of institutions and their accountability to society are two simple demands accepted universally in democratic theory. In India, the attitude of the ruling elite has been ambivalent. The world's most heavily written Constitution did not provide guarantees for institutional autonomy. Consequently, the power elite easily manipulated with impunity institutions in the service of legitimate or illegitimate power. Arbitrary intervention by the government, the overloading of institutions with an array of contradictory objectives, procedural supervision exercised by higher authority without stating the reasons, appointment of incompetent and politically motivated personnel, misuse of resources, corruption both by insiders and outsiders, absence of internal autonomy, etc. are some of the commonplace maladies of our institutions.

Nehru was, paradoxically, the builder and eroder of institutions. How and why he planned things in this manner is important but does not concern us here. What concerns us is the simple fact that he left behind a number of institutions, set up by him, either underdeveloped or in a shambles. The remaining task of destroying both the functionality and autonomy of institutions was left to his successors, most prominently Indira Gandhi who openly corrupted, divided and destroyed the institutional edifice set up by her father or what existed before him, and often by the use of extra-constitutional methods.

The Reserve Bank is one such institution whose primary responsibility is the administration of monetary policy as distinguished from or alongwith other policies, particularly fiscal public investment policies. The Reserve Bank of India, like all central banks all over the world, was given several functions to perform. For instance, the Reserve Bank is a bankers bank; it is a banker to the government; it is the final dealer and authority in foreign exchange transactions and rates; it is the guardian of the nation's monetary resources; it administers government debt and it is called the lender of the last resort, etc. All this is commonplace but when put into action, the results are not always the same. The Reserve Bank has never told the public how these functions were eroded by the government.

In developing economics in which financial intermediation is restricted to urban areas, the central bank is the most authoritative and powerful promoter of financial institutions such as banks, and financial intermediaries, development banking, cooperative banking, etc. It is a long list. In essence and law, most of these functions belong to the area of the government but the government itself has delegated them to the Reserve Bank as is done in other countries. But this delegation has drawn attention away from the manipulation of the Reserve Bank by the government.

It is one thing to expect the monetary authority to reconcile a variety of objectives and produce a trade-off between conflicting ones. It is quite another to fix monetary policy and pressurise this authority to lose its identity. Economic objectives do take precedence over monetary objectives but since the two have distinct areas, the latter cannot be made so subservient to the former as to lose its own control and authority.

If the economic policy is wrongly formulated and the monetary authority through monetary policy is obliged to reinforce it, the results could be disastrous. This has often happened in India. This is clearer when fiscal policies are expanding because monetary policy should be somewhat contracting to moderate the inflationary impact of the former. However, an expanding fiscal policy may get reinforced by an expanding monetary policy to facilitate credit-monetary support to the government budget. Notwithstanding all kinds of credit restrictions imposed by the Reserve Bank, the situation in India is more like the last mentioned relationship.

For the past four decades, the government has kept the Reserve Bank, its resources and control over the banking system, in absolute captivity. In the name of appropriating bank finance for the development at government expenditure and the public sector, the commercial banks were obliged to invest nearly one-third of their deposits in government securities and that at an interest rate determined by the government, and not by the open market rates. It is often ignored that till the middle of the sixties when the public sector expanded fast, the government got bank finance at less than five per cent per annum.

Over and above that the government never felt constrained in issuing Treasury Bills which corres-

The author, a noted economist, is a former Member of the Planning Commission.

ponded to the level of the budget deficit and the interest on which was nearly zero as it was reduced to an inter-governmental accounting. The fiscal deficit as distinguished from the budgetary deficit included all government borrowing plus the budget deficit financed by resort to the printing press.

The Reserve Bank was left with control over the residual resources through which it was obliged to reconcile all the conflicting objections. Consequently, the system faced the challenge of mounting internal debt as well as rapid increase in the money supply. The Reserve Bank was given no control over the former but in respect of the latter, the Reserve Bank was made helpless. The control over the money supply could only be exercised by squeezing the credit to the private sector which often hurt both trade and industry. When the history of the Reserve Bank would be written, it would indict the Bank for retarding rather than providing growth, even while achieving rapid financial intermediation. The Indian paradox was marked by a financial institutional revolution which pushed these institutions to utter bankruptcy.

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THROUGH its various studies, the Reserve Bank has tried to create the impression that it has a theoretical model for the demand for money and it uses this model to control the demand. This is utterly false and is not acceptable to the economists. The Reserve Bank is a victim of its own delusion.

The demand for money could be determined by finding a historical trend by fitting a simple or complicated regression equation—all kinds of equations have produced the same result—but the supply determination of money was constrained by the prior government demand on it. The demand to fill the budgetary deficit determined the money supply. Over the years as the deficit increased, the money supply increased two to three times of real growth of the economy, thus building up a continuous inflationary potential which in turn further expanded the deficit as the elasticity of tax revenue to money supply income, money, etc. declined over the years.

Economists made the mistake of looking at only the tax elasticity with respect to income which was subject to change in tax rate and was not a reliable indicator. In the long run, the big business did not suffer. Only medium and small industries were squeezed, leading to lakhs of units either closing down or getting sick. Monetary policy became captive both of the government and the big business.

The Reserve Bank tried to manage, as best as it could, credit money in the short and seasonal periods but it lost control over long-term trends or the expansion of money supply and credit. Long term supplies were determined by the government draft on the Reserve Bank. Through the strict conditions imposed on it, the Bank worked between the limits of the needs of the priority sectors as laid down by the Planning Commission on behalf of the government by way of differential interest rates ceilings on credit and the minimum needs of business. Thus the government's financial profligacy and recklessness were covered by the Reserve Bank and the Planning Commission.

How much the expansion of money supply is non-inflationary and how to keep it at that level were heroic tasks which increasingly got out of the control of the Reserve Bank. In fact, there is no concept of non-inflationary money supply left to work with. Economists with their pet theories dub the Reserve Bank policy as monetarist, Keynesian, Hawtrian, developmental, etc. They are indulging in simple half-truths. The concepts of high-powered money, CRR, SLR, currency-deposit ratios became instruments of financial anarchy. But they are useful to make policies if the Reserve Bank has a real control over them. Money supply, credit creation and distribution interest rates, etc. are set by the Indian fiscal rather than the monetary authorities. The so-called selective credit control exercised by the Reserve Bank has been an appendage of fiscal policy and the Reserve Bank's ego.

Even within massive government controls and reckless fiscal policy, the most critical instrument left with the Reserve Bank was the Open Market Operations. It is a great pity that the Reserve Bank never effectively used it and surrendered the instrument to the government for maintaining a low price of the public debt and low interest rates and an acceptable profile of the government debt. No central bank in the world has ever surrendered the autonomy of the open market operations as the Reserve Bank has and only for this reason its delinking from the government is called for.

When faced with a complicated and difficult situation, the Reserve Bank has come out with its own bonds for sale to the public. Anyone could hold these bonds for any amount and pay no tax on them. This is a sign of the Bank's total erosion of its own autonomy. It need not be emphasised that the monetary and fiscal authorities have opened the final window for the government to grab whatever it can, without bothering about the consequences or the expansion of the fiscal deficit. The Reserve Bank's surrender to the government is complete and it came at a time when the autonomy of the Reserve Bank was most needed to stop the government expenditure going berserk (its fiscal policies having lost all restraint).

Nevertheless, whereas the government's policies have done enough damage and created a lot of monetary instability, the Reserve Bank did try to limit the damage in the first three decades, but unfortunately, under the Rajiv-Indira regime, it was obliged to adopt policies which created further instability. The eighties probably constituted the worst period for the Reserve Bank's role in generating monetary instability. If this mischief is to be stopped, autonomy is absolutely essential.

The present Governor of the Reserve Bank does not evoke confidence either among the bankers or among the business. He has shown no sign of independence or even full understanding of what is happening. He seems to have given up even the earlier stated objective of keeping the credit limit of non-inflationary monetisation of the economy and some additional credit for productive public sector activities. The government has played havoc with the bank by violating both these objectives and nothing in the world can justify the domination of the Reserve Bank by the government. The government has been totally irresponsible in creating excess money and liquidity in the system on the one hand, and mopping it up for its own wasteful expenditure on the other.

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IN recent years, the Reserve Bank has totally failed to control the overdrafts to the State Governments, despite making a lot of noise about it. The States are right in condemning the Reserve Bank for practising gross discrimination between the Centre and the States. In reality, there is no such thing as State deficit, whether or not the Reserve Bank allows overdraft beyond the limit. Ultimately it creates a deficit in the Central Government.

Professor P.R. Brahamananda has in a study stated:

> It is clear that the Reserve Bank of India does not enjoy even the semblance of autonomy as per law. That it does not enjoy autonomy by convention or by courtesy is well-known. The Central Government, in effect the Finance Ministry, has bossed over the Reserve Bank both in essentials and in detail. It is not that the top officials and minions of the Finance Ministry are themselves the bosses. The Finance Minister and the government at Delhi, the political rulers of the parties in power, have been the overlords of the Reserve Bank. They have treated the Reserve Bank as their 'creature'. The Reserve Bank has had no control over the scale of its (forced) lendings to the government. The Reserve Bank has been asked year by year, to purchase the ad hoc treasury bills issued to it; in return the RBI has continuously replenished the case balances of the government. Like Draupadi's inexhaustible vessel getting replenished with food, the amount to the credit of the government in the Banking Department has been continuously filled and refilled with cash balances by the purchase of ad hocs and issuance of bank notes and their transfer to the government's account.

The Reserve Bank has contributed a lot to the mismanagement and failure of commercial banks, despite the authoritarian dictats issued to the banks at regular intervals. Commercial banks face profit squeeze. Because of a lot of window-dressing, the real picture remains unclear, but some banks become quite sick and the Reserve Bank, despite its strong elaborate monetoring activity, is not clear how to avoid the collapse of some banks.

The Narasimham Committee has suggested fundamental changes in the working of the banking system. Its recommendations fall mainly into two categories: first those which would reduce the government's draft on the banking system and the second, which would give the Reserve Bank some autonomy from the Finance Ministry itself that had set up the Committee. But the government has the habit of killing the recommendations of its own committees. This must not happen if the monetary system is not to collapse and inflation is to be brought under control.

This is not the place to go into the details of the report of the Committee. Those recommendations which are connected with the autonomy deserve mention. For instance, the recommendation to reduce the statutory liquidity requirements to 25 per cent over a five year period and limit the credit for the priority sector upto 10 per cent of the aggregate credit can only be administered if the Reserve Bank can say no to the government. More importantly, in view of the terrible shape of the banking system the suggested reorganisation of the banks and other financial institutions is just not possible if the Finance Ministry keeps its hold on the Reserve Bank. The banks with large debts have taken shelter under the plea that the government has been ordering them to provide credit in the name of one objective or another. This is partly true but the banks themselves have been guility of misusing this provision. Let us not ignore the fact that bank managers are the most corrupt lot. They have learnt a lot from their bosses, the IAS personnel.

The autonomy of the Reserve Bank cannot be guaranteed if the government keeps nominating its Directors. In fact, even under the existing law, the government should have been more considerate towards the viability of the banks by withholding the temptation of nominating all kinds of people as Directors who simply forwarded instructions of the Finance Ministry and who instead of protecting the interests of the Reserve Bank allowed them to be subverted.

It is not often realised that the Indian financial bureaucracy has become the most powerful class within our class spectrum. If bank managers are opposed to the privatisation of banks, it is because they are unwilling to give up the enormous power they enjoy and the money they pocket on loans. This class can do a lot of damage or good to the economy. Only an autonomous, powerful body can control them. The autonomy of the Reserve Bank has become a matter of great urgency and a national imperative. ■

Hindutva and Perversion of Nationalism

SUKUMAR MURALIDHARAN

At a juncture when the national consensus seems to be crumbling under the twin assault of terrorism in Punjab and armed insurgency in Kashmir, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has chosen to press ahead with its politics of ritual *yatras*. The party President, Murali Manohar Joshi's triumphal procession from Kanyakumari to Kashmir concluded on a note of farce on January 26. In a less publicised, but nevertheless significant, development, the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) commenced a *Vivekananda Bharat parikrama yatra* from Calcutta on January 12. The latest in the series of *yatras* is expected to culminate at Kanyakumari in the month of December, after wending its way through a 22,000 kilometre route across the country.

The RSS-BJP combine obviously believes that the malady of national disunity and discord calls for drastic remedies, which only it is in a position to administer. And with self-doubt and indecision seeming to have gripped the national political apparatus, it is not surprising that the *ekta yatra* struck a responsive chord in various sections of the country.

A large part of the reason is the seductive simplicity of the message of the *ekta yatra*. Among the stated motivations for the journey, the foremost was that of reasserting the unity and indivisibility of India, and of focusing the nation's attention upon the primordial cultural solidarity that makes it one. Since the majority in the nation is Hindu, the cultural ethos of the nation is Hinduism. The secessionist tendency in the Muslim enclave of Kashmir, the *yatra* asserted, would be thwarted by the combined will of the Hindu majority. If a minority in Kashmir should insist on its right to self-determination, then it would be swamped by a majoritarian tide.

The ideologues of *Hindutva* had carefully laid the groundwork for this assertion of the majoritarian will in Kashmir. While reflecting interminably upon his tenure in the State, the former Jammu and Kashmir Governor, Jagmohan, observed in his most implausibly titled book, *My Frozen Turbulence in Kashmir*, that the key to a resolution of the problems in the State would be a "reformed, reawakened, and rejuvenated Hinduism". In an article inspired by a reading of this book, Swapan Dasgupta (*The Times of India*, September 30, 1991) ruled out the possibility of a "permanent Muslim rapprochement within the Indian republic", and suggested that there may be no alternative but the "demographic Indianisation" of the Kashmir Valley. And at just around the same time, Arun Shourie was laying out the *modus operandi* for such a process: all the security personnel involved in the operations in Kashmir, he proposed, should be given the title to buy land in the Valley, and presumably, to make the Valley their home (*The Economic Times*, September 29, 1991).

Ulster and Palestine Revisited?

The upshot is fairly clear. The Indian Army should conduct itself as a colonial army of occupation. And the Indian Government should inaugurate in the Kashmir Valley, a systematic process of colonisation, much in the manner of the British in Ulster, and the Jews in Palestine. That these suggestions do not in any way conflict with their own assertions that Kashmir is an integral part of the Indian nation, shows that the latter-day proponents of *Hindutva* share their forebears' ability to reconcile the irreconcilables.

The *ekta yatra* reaffirmed a theme that was highlighted by the former President of the BJP, L.K. Advani, in the course of his infamous *rath yatra* of 1990. The target of that mobilisation was the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya—a monument allegedly built in desecration of the sacred spot marking the birthplace of the primeval Hindu hero, Lord Ram.

Advani had then been completely unrepentant about the virulent agitationist programme launched to take over this spot. And with a style and clarity that his successor conspicuously lacks, he had outlined the basic principles of *Hindutva*: Hinduism is the basic ethos of the land, the cultural foundation of Indian nationalism. The revival of Hindu solidarity is coterminous, if not synonymous with national renewal. None of the national heroes who wrought India's freedom from the colonial yoke thought it necessary to apologise for the fact that they drew their inspiration from the Hindu religious tradition, he argued. And this point, he further underlined through reference to the various parallels between the mobilisation for the Ram Janmabhoomi, and Bal Gangadhar Tilak's revival of the Ganapati festival at the turn of the last century, Gandhi's campaign for the protection of the mother cow, and Sardar Patel's active support for the reconstruction of the Somnath temple.

Each of these historical parallels calls for attention. Spurious reinterpretations of history are the staple of the ideologues of *Hindutva*. Thus, we have Girilal Jain writing *(The Times of India*, December 17, 1991), that Indian culture and ethnicity, "cannot be said to be rooted in anything other than the Vedas". And this is so, "not only because nothing older survives but also because nothing basically alien to them can be located in any part of the land".

Girilal Jain's equation of ethnicity with culture is bizarre, as indeed, his effort to assimilate the diversity of Indian cultures to the Vedic tradition. Equally extravagant is the BJP ideologue, K.R. Malkani's claim, made during a polemical response to the novelist Mulk Raj Anand's criticism of the *ekta yatra*, that the concept of the "nation" is specifically Vedic in origin *(The Hindu*, January 10, 1992). By implication, therefore, the idea of a Hindu nation is a millenia old, and has nothing to do with more recent historical developments.

All this represents strong medicine for the ills of the Indian nation. And while on this theme, it is necessary to ask whether a "permanent Muslim rapprochement within the Indian republic" is at all possible, given the wide currency that such tendentious interpretations of history enjoy. Rammanohar Lohia, the great proponent of an indigenous brand of socialism, put it rather aptly:

> The force that separates most is a particular view of history. Groups and communities are formed *principally* through the view they hold of what has happened. .. The Hindu *and Muslim views of their common* history have differed in the past as they do today, and that is the main *cause of their separation* in identity and action.

Can this nation of diverse faiths, plural identities and syncretist traditions ingest this bitter medicine of Hindu unitarism? As an ideological programme, Hindu nationalism does not represent anything novel. It dates from rather early in the history of the anti-colonial movement. Though it professes to unite, Hindu unitarism only succeeds in dividing, because it is not merely different from unity; it is its very antithesis. Once before have the people of this country paid a heavy price for the pursuit of this homogenising view of nationhood. And the price to pay in the years to come could be equally high.

Early Days of Hindu Nationalism

Among the early propagandists of this view of Hindu nationalism, the trio of great radicals from the days of *swadeshi* movement—Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, and Bipin Chandra Pal—rank very high. Tilak was convinced that "religion is an element in nationality"; and his reading of India's subjugation to the British strongly harked back to a mythical golden age which had been lost:

> Vedic religion was the religion of the Aryans from a very early time. ... During Vedic times India was a self-contained country. It was united as a great nation. That unity has disappeared bringing on us great degradation and it becomes the duty of the leaders to revive that union.

Lajpat Rai took much the same line, though in his case, the inspiration from concurrent European experience, filtered through the ideology of the Arya Samaj, was unmistakable: "Is Hinduism entirely devoid of any basal principles on which the foundations of a church national could be laid?" he asked in a debate with an ideological opponent of his time. And he answered the question in the negative, since he had "substantial reasons to maintain that Hinduism is at least as much a religious nationality as its sister faiths, Christianity or Islam".

And in a statement that is confoundingly tautological, but would nevertheless bring joy to the heart of K.R. Malkani, Lajpat Rai further opined that "the ideas of nationality and patriotism are as old as the different countries into which the earth is divided, as ancient as the distinctions of race and religion that have been existing in this world from times immemorial and pre-historic".

And yet, this belief was based less on an understanding of the culture and material life of the mass of the Indian people, than upon supernatural faith and superstition. This is apparent from a few sentences, where Lajpat Rai confesses—with a transparent honesty and candour that today's ideologues of *Hindutva* lack—that his comprehension of Hindu scripture was limited:

> The fact is that the best and the most glorious period of Aryan supremacy is yet a closed chapter to us. Almost the whole of the pre-Buddhistic period is shrouded in mystery. Even the literature that has reached us is so full of allusions, enigmas, signs, and names and is written in such an archaic language that the whole thing seems to be a mystery. According to the best of European authorities, the language of the Vedas is so full of obsolete and archaic forms and expressions that the whole seems to be a cipher which with the best of efforts might take years to decipher.

Yet the magical qualities of these inscrutable texts were such that the Lion of Punjab was prepared to suspend credibility and assert that the Hindus, "directly or indirectly, profess to accept the Vedas as their religious scripture", and believe that these are "the words of God" and "infallible".

Two things are apparent here: the effort to model a Hindu religion—a "national church"—upon European analogues, and a dependence upon European interpreters of the Indian scripture. In his memoirs written after retirement from active politics, the great Bengali nationalist, Bipin Chandra Pal, admitted quite candidly, that the invention of the Hindu tradition was directly inspired by the European experience.

Particularly powerful in their influence upon the development of Hindu nationalism, were the German philologists such as Max Mueller, and the Theosophical Society of Colonel Olcott and Madame Blavatsky. The Aryan theory of race, developed by German philologists around the middle of the nineteenth century, had a profound effect in this regard. Purporting to show a common ancestry for the people of Europe, Persia and the northern Indian sub-continent, the Aryan theory of race carried connotations of racial equality which came as sweet music to the rising Indian upper castes.

At the hands of Tilak, the Aryan theory of race became a manifesto of Hindu revivalism. In the first of his efforts at Vedic interpretation, *Orion*, Tilak argued that amongst all the Aryan peoples, only those in India had preserved all the great traditions of the race, "with a super religious fidelity and scrupulousness". In his later work, *The Arctic Home in the Vedas,* Tilak went even further, celebrating the "vitality and superiority" of the Aryan races, "as disclosed by their conquest, by extermination or assimilation, or the non-Aryan races, with whom they came in contact...".

The Popular Tradition

It is a characteristic feature of this ideological stand-point that it was totally insensitive to those who may have been at the receiving end of this process of "extermination and assimilation". The Aryan theory of race was, in this respect, a two-edged sword, which could as well have been used against the Hindu nationalist position. And such an anticipatory rejoinder had indeed been prepared by the great Marathi visionary and social reformer, Jyotirao Phule, at least two decades ahead of Tilak's Vedic excursus.

The word "Hindu" occurs but rarely in Phule's political discourse, and the word "Aryan"—so critical to the greater vehicle of Hinduism—only with a load of negative connotations. Phule's pathbreaking social reform work is well known, and this alone entitles him to a far greater position in the history of the Indian awakening, than has been accorded to him. The reason for his relative neglect, undoubtedly, is that he went too far in opposing the ideological trends that were soon to establish their dominance.

In 1867—four years ahead of Dayanand Saraswati's Arya Samaj—Phule founded the Satya Shodhak Samaj, or "Truth-Seeker's Society". He disagreed with the two main reformist organisations that existed then—the Bombay-based Prarthana Samaj and the Calcutta-based Brahmo Samaj. He went so far as to denounce their efforts to sanctify the "political designs" hatched by "Brahmin brains", and to propagate the reactionary tenets of the Vedas and the Bhagwad Gita.

Phule's rediscovery of Indian traditions followed a course diametrically opposed to that of the Hindu nationalists. He was able to put into perspective many of the moral ambivalences in Hindu scriptures by interpreting them as rationalisations of the Aryan conquest of a *shudra* homeland. Thus, King Bali—the *asura* king who was banished from his kingdom by the trickery of Vaman, an incarnation of Vishnu—became the central icon in the *shudra* pantheon.

The power of Phule's imagery is very apparent. To this day, the putative day of King Bali's return to his kingdom remains the major festival of the State of Kerala. And the lower castes of Karnataka and Maharashtra celebrate Diwali—the quintessential Brahmin festival, supposed to mark the return of Shri Ram to Ayodhya—as the day vouchsafed for Bali's annual visit to his people.

Phule's movement of radical social reform—characterised by the militant self-assertion of the lower castes—did not long survive his death in 1892. The political terrain towards the end of the nineteenth century was captured by the Hindu nationalists and the genteel Anglophiles of the Indian National Congress—the former beginning by then to enjoy a distinct ascendancy.

While Phule was alive, the Congress had been obliged to recognise the aspirations that he represented. Together with the annual meetings of the Congress, an Indian Social Reforms Conference was also held. In 1895, the Hindu nationalists led by Tilak, heady from their victory in the Age of Consent Bill agitation, effectively wrecked this convention. Rather than risk a split in their ranks, the more cosmopolitan elements of the Congress agreed to remove social reforms entirely from their agenda of action.

The case of the nationalists was aptly put by Lajpat Rai: "Reform is revival and revival is reform". While national consolidation was undoubtedly important, this should be based entirely on rational foundations, said Lajpat Rai. And "nothing can be either national or rational which is against the spirit of the Vedas."

These conceptions of Hindu nationalism only succeeded in alienating the entirety of the Muslim and lower caste populations. With the inauguration of competitive politics from around the end of the nineteenth century—in the shape of a limited degree of local self-government—the alienation of the Muslims only deepened.

As the British progressively vacated the political space of governance, allowing incrementally higher levels of Indian participation; the compulsions of communal mobilisation became more acute. Electoral politics in British India remained the preserve of a select few. Even as late as 1936, the franchise remained subject to stringent property qualifications, so that almost 80 per cent of the adult male population, and virtually the entire female population, remained out of its ambit.

The property qualifications had very different implications for the various communities. The Indian Muslims, who had initially been rather reticent in taking to Western education and commerce, remained economically rather backward. Strict enforcement of the property qualification would have given them a far lower number of voters than their proportionate strength in the population. The constitutional device adopted to overcome this limitation was that of separate electorates. There was undoubtedly an element of imperial "divide and rule" in this calculation. But the Muslim leadership clung tenaciously to constitutional guarantees of separate electorates because of the relative economic backwardness of their community.

The Hindu nationalists were completely averse to the idea. Lajpat Rai denounced the concept as "a denial of the principle of nationality" and a "partition of India". But it never occurred to him that a solution could take the form of broadening the franchise, and diluting—if not eliminating—the property qualification.

Electoral Politics and Hindu Consolidation

Among all the historical personalities who have contributed to a Hindu consolidation, the name of E.A. Gait must rank very high. A statistician of some merit, Gait found himself in 1911, directing the census operations of the Imperial Government of India. With representation in the scheme of political reforms then being proportional to the numerical strength of the various communities, the census was expected to provide the basis for important constitutional decisions.

E.A. Gait took upon himself the onerous taks of enumerating the number of "Hindus" in the Indian subcontinent. Towards this end, he sent out a questionaire to the various provincial Census Superintendents, listing a series of criteria that supposedly qualified a person for the appellation of "Hindu". The responses he obtained were so diverse that he was driven to the conclusion that "the Hindu residuum is a most heterogeneous mixture". In certain regions, he found, upto 50 per cent of the population normally classed as "Hindus" failed to answer to most of the criteria for such classification. But the question being beyond his comprehension, Gait decided in favour of not altering the conventional scheme of classification.

In a history of the Arya Samaj written in 1915, Lajpat Rai recorded the profound sense of disquiet that orthodox Hindu nationalists experienced as a result of the Gait circular. But the end-result was a happy one, in Lajpat Rai's estimation:

> The Gait Circular had a quite unexpected effect and galvanised the dying body of orthodox Hinduism into sympathy with its untouchable population, because that was so necessary to avert its downfall.

However, the main body of Hindu nationalism remained resistant to the idea of social reform. In 1917, the Depressed Classes Federation, under the chairmanship of Narayan Chandavarkar, met in Bombay and resolved that the reforms then being worked out, should guarantee the Depressed Classes "the right to elect their own representatives in proportion to their numbers".

The Government of India Act of 1919 failed to accommodate this demand. And the Congress continued to remain apathetic. When the next round of reforms was being negotiated at the Round Table Conference of 1931, the Imperial Government decided, in response to the representation of B.R. Ambedkar, that a separate electorate for the Depressed Classes would indeed be introduced. Few then anticipated that the decision would produce the kind of reaction it did from Mahatma Gandhi.

In a letter to the British Prime Minister early in September 1932, Gandhi affirmed that if the decision on separate electorates was implemented, he would be faced with no alternative but to undertake a fast unto death. In separate electorates, he said:

> I sense the injection of poison that is calculated to destroy Hinduism and do no good whatever to the Depressed Classes.

When his exhortations failed to yield the desired result, the Mahatma commenced his epic fast on September 20, much to the bewilderment of even close associates like Jawaharlal Nehru.

In the event, Gandhi was successful. Ambedkar retreated from his insistence on separate electorates, in return for an assured representation in legislative institutions. But certain questions from the "epic fast" still remain unanswered. Why, for instance, did Mahatma Gandhi not consider the denial of franchise to vast sections of the country, and the separate electorate for the Indian Muslims, to be causes equally worthy of his attention?

It is crucial to note here that it was not the militant tradition that saved the day for the supposedly united and indivisible Hindu community, but the benevolent paternalism of Gandhi—in Jawaharlal Nehru's words—the "religious and sentimental" approach that the Mahatma had patented in his approach to political questions. And it was precisely this tradition of tolerance that Hindu nationalism ultimately had to physically liquidate.

Ambedkar had yielded ground in 1932, but he remained unreconciled. Recapitulating these events in 1943, he seemed still intent on carving out a separate set of legislative institutions for the Depressed Classes. And his rationalisation of this demand carries a ring of contemporaneity:

> The Untouchables are not opposed to freedom from British Imperialism. What they refuse to be content with is mere freedom from British Imperialism. What they insist upon is that free India should be made safe for democracy. Starting with this aim, they say that if no provisions are made in the Constitution to cut the fangs of the Hindu Communal Majority, India will not be safe for demcoracy.

But the Depressed Classes question was by then becoming peripheral. Hindu-Muslim antagonisms were hardening, propelling the country inexorably towards the holocaust of partition. Taking over as the Prime Minister of independent India, Jawaharlal Nehru knew at first hand what the disastrous consequences of religious nationalism could be. His practice of statecraft was marked by the effort to evolve a secular consensus, quite distinct of the appeal of religious loyalties. The Nehruvian consensus asserted that the state represented Indians of all cultures, denominations, and linguistic affiliations. The Indian people had in concert fought for their freedom from colonialism, and constituted themselves in the Indian state, which represented their will. As a microcosmic reflection of the Indian people, the state would guarantee equality and access for all, irrespective of religious, linguistic, or cultural affiliations.

It is no wonder then that independent India has suffered its worst episodes of communal tensions when the state has shown signs of retreating from this commitment. Such an episode occurred in the mid-1960s, when the Nehruvian consensus was shattered by the military debacle against China, and the economic crisis following upon the 1965 drought. Another such chapter—perhaps yet unclosed—began in the early-1980s, when Indira Gandhi realised that pandering to communal sentiments could be a useful ploy to stay politically afloat.

This cynical game finally claimed Indira Gandhi's life. But her son and political successor carried it to absurd lengths. Before long, however, the conflicting pulls of governance compromised Rajiv Gandhi's communal gambit. And starting with the *Ram shilanyas pooja* of 1989, the BJP seized the initiative in the game of communal mobilisation.

In its propaganda, the BJP consciously harks back to the founders of the Hindu nationalist traditions, such as Tilak, Lajpat Rai and Bipin Chandra Pal. But the similarities clearly are peripheral. Lal, Bal and Pal were men of indubitable courage, who had to work with a relatively undeveloped historical tradition. In their struggle against a colonial power, they had to improvise and invent a tradition that could serve as a reference point for the millions of people that they sought to mobilise. That in this effort they invented a tradition that alienated large sections of the Indian people, does not detract in any way from their historical role in the Indian freedom struggle.

But what precisely is the BJP fighting against, in an independent and sovereign India? Is a minority of a hundred million Muslims in this country of 850 million such a threat to the image of Indian culture? Or is their political agenda summed up by that good citizen of Ahmedabad, who does part-time duty as an activist of the Bajrang Dal? This latter day hero of Hindu nationalism found his acquisitive instincts in urban real estate thwarted by a certain Muslim gentleman. By engineering a small riot, he found that he could possibly get this prime piece of urban real estate vacated to his profit. And what better occasion could there be for this pursuit of profit than the arrival of the *ekta yatra* in the city of Ahmedabad? What better guise could commercial poaching take than that of Hindu nationalism? ■

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A Crisis of Leadership

EKRAM KHAWAR

Where does the Indian Muslim community find itself today? Pushed to the centre-state of a vulgar discourse masquerading as 'nationalism' and caught between the murderous intents of Thackerays and Ritambharas at one end and the suicidal rhetoric of the Bukharis at the other; between the 'Hate *yatra*' sponsored by the suave 'DCM-Toyota Guru' and the political brinkmanship of the Shahabuddins and Saits; between the communal stance of a 'national press' and the avariciously inflammatory role of an over sympathetic Urdu press; between the opportunism of major political parties and an apathy verging on antipathy of the state machinery, this beleaguered community, even after more than four decades, continues to grapple with the onerous problems relating to its existence.

Viewed from an isolationist, exclusivist vintage point, the collective political experience of Muslims of the Indian sub-continent, for most part of this century, is reminiscent of a great Greek tragedy. Such a view, specially in view of the academically more fashionable yet metaphysical tendency of counterpoising the 'particular' against the 'general' would prima-facie appear to be an example of intellectual bankruptcy arising out of apathy to the collective sufferings of the teeming millions. Yet such a view becomes necessary, in view of the continuing tragedy of Muslims as a social group, and also to analyse the role and contribution (sic!) of the so-called Muslim leadership to the course of its political 'destiny'.

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THE continuing tragedy of Muslims, as opposed to most other contemporary social groups, lies partly in the fact of its continued adherence to a defunct set of identity and politics largely responsible for its ghettoisation, serving both as a grand sanctuary of psychological refuge as well as a whipping stick in the hands of forces antagonist to it. Here, one may have a tendency to hark back on the nefarious role of aggressive communal organisations belonging to the great RSS family which continues to attract the attention of the liberal intellegentsia, though surprisingly, the share of responsibility of the Muslims' politico-cultural leadership in the overall plight of Muslims is yet to be properly highlighted. It becomes absolutely necessary, precisely because of this, that the conduct of this leadership is judged vis-a-vis the interest of the very community it purports to serve. And needless to surmise that the political conduct of this elite leadership in the totality of politics as practised by it, amounts to nothing less than an act of political harakiri; wilful or otherwise. Rather, as one proceeds through the recent history of the sub-continent it becomes apparent that the conduct of the Muslim leadership smacked of apathy and indifference, if not of outright contempt to the plight of the common Muslim.

Does one need any proof? Not at all! Even if one chooses to look at things from a selfishly communal angle (leave aside any thought of national or human angles) and even casually glances through the official statistics of those massacred in the twin dramas of partition and the Bangladesh liberation movement, the short-sightedness and historical culpability of the elite Muslim leadership is established beyond any doubt. And this by all accounts poor leadership, will be seen in still poorer lights if one has the temerity of taking into account the continuing tragedy of Muslims in terms of their overall political experience in India as well as in Pakistan.

Even though the gallery is full of heroes, it is against this backrop that the heroes are to be judged.

The 'Qaid', we are told, leaving behind a lucrative personal career, joins politics on a 'nationalist platform' but soon, thwarted by certain elements, he is convinced of a murky Muslim future in a predominantly Hindu India and the inevitability of Pakistan—the panacea and the 'promised land'. Once having come to the conclusion he did all that was necessary to secure a 'dignified' place under the sun for his Muslim brethren with a single-minded devotion and vengeance as if he was determined to get his pound of flesh as well as to teach his erstwhile detractors a thing or two. And sooner than anyone could have visualised, Pakistan was a reality. The 'Qaid' thus succeeded in his great mission against heavy odds and in the process redeemed himself as well as the community. Never mind the millions who fell down on the way and the millions uprooted. Never talk, for only the weak-hearted talk, of a saga of blood, toil and tears and the deep wounds to remain open in the Muslim psyche for generations to come. Gentlemen! as was only to be expected, Pakistan has already answered to all the problems of Muslims. The 'Qaid', after all, has passed into history and whether one accepts its raison d'etre or not, Pakistan, the fruit of his labour, is already a reality.

But what happened, way back in India, after partition? They have all gone, some in their 'Dakotas' and some by the 'Peshawar Express'. The 'dreg' representing the peasantry and the common man (to use a much maligned word) is left behind, readying to find its place in a predominantly 'Hindu' yet secular India; readying to get over its historical guilt and finding itself at the bottom of the social ladder. Is it a wonder that in such conditions there is a drought of active Muslim leadership till the leftover fumbling Indian Muslim begins to find his bearing and starts asserting himself? And as if to embody this newly found assertion there arrives Syed Shahabuddin.

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SYED Shahabuddin—a bureaucrat turned politican—intelligent, educated in a modern way, well-versed in the art of real politik and having the requisite intellectual capacity to lead the community, joins politics on a national platform, becomes a Central Minister in the Janata Party Government and it seems that now, after all these years, the Muslim community will fight for its emancipation in collaboration with other secular democratic forces. But lo and behold! the JP Government falls like nine pins and there we find Syed Shahabuddin clamouring for a seat in the Bihar Rajya Sabha and there, he is stunningly defeated by the negative votes of his own party colleagues! Such a state of affairs cannot go on. It won't be allowed to. It once again proves the desirability as well as efficacy of politics veering round the community.

No wonder that Shahabuddin too finds that now onwards only his Muslim identity is to take him forward. And did he have to wait long? No! The Shah Bano case, thanks to a sudden and maliciously 'pro-women', over-jealous attention of a national press whose real character was to be known in the tumultuous days of October 1990 only, presented itself as a God-sent opportunity. Syed Shahabuddin does not squander the chance, rather he seizes it with both hands. The *Ummah* is convinced of the dangers to its faith over and above those of life and property which it is used to. The Muslim psyche through persuasion, disinformation and even deception at times is keyed up to such a hysterical state that the mere grant of alimony to a divorced wife is made out to be an unpardonable affront to the Islamic code. And whatever differences of opinion did prevail within the community were drowned in the ensuing cacophony. But do such trivialities as grant of alimony to divorced women really matter? What really matters is that the 'faith' has to be redeemed and that, too, to the benefit of the leadership. The Muslim leadership does benefit to be sure. Rising on a wave of self-righteous Muslim indignance, Syed Shahabuddin again finds himself in that august office known as Parliament and ensures that the interests of the community are served in the best possible manner. What other than the enactment of a Muslim Women Protection Act could serve it better?

Even though a proper study of the sociological factors underlying the recent rise of militant Hinduism is essential for a fuller understanding of it, yet it would require naivette of a very special order to assume that such actions as manifested in the call to boycott Independence Day celebrations; issuance of ultimatums amounting to calling upon the Muslims to compensate for the inaction of the government to stop the *rath yatra;* the hue and cry raised against the court verdict in the Shah Bano case and the much recent hobnobbing of the so-called Muslim leadership with 'sword-brandishing' politicians of dubious credentials have had no role to play in the communalisation of the Hindu middle class on a scale unknown before.

Nay! it would be almost childish to expect this leadership to display any sense of responsibility or restraint since the very existence of it rests on the prevalence of a sense of insecurity amongst the Muslims and a set of political gimmickery centring around it. Naturally enough, the more this sense of insecurity; real or imaginery, is heightened, the more is the prospect for the leadership to shine and thrive and thus understandably a very strident and emotionally loaded stance has to be assumed in all public postures so as to keep the mind (and thereby political behaviour) of the *'millat'* on the right track.

Need one say that the 'real champions' of the *millat* have learnt their lessons quite well, so much so that almost in the footsteps of the politicians even the cultural leadership uses the same plank as a permanent strategy to keep their industry going, much to the peril of the *millat*. That perhaps is the compelling reason why the dominant voice of the Urdu press continues to be directed towards maintaining and heightening a persecution complex in the Muslim psyche by 'exposing' the acts of omission and commission of an 'antagonistic' Indian state.

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IS it by a grand design or just by a purely fortuitous chance that such vastly different personalities as Imam Bukhari, Syed Shahabuddin and Shahid Siddiqui, not to mention the smaller fishes, are all found talking in a similar vein, with subtle differences, if any, of style, ornamentation and emphasis only. Understandably so! Because given their priorities, the only logical endeavour has to be in the direction of weaning the Muslim consciousness away from secular parties and politics.

Wo will pose the question relating to the continued existence of the Babri Masjid in the face of a well-orchestrated assault by the BJP and sister organisations? Does it owe its existence to Syed Shahabuddin, Imam Bukhari and the BAMC or does it owe it to the political assertions of secular parties and secular citizens of the country, an overriding majority of whom happen to be 'Hindus'? But no! if someone has the gumption of putting his faith in the secular Hindus for the protection of such chiefly Muslim concerns as Babri Masjid, there can't be any doubt about his/her suspect loyalty to the community. By some quirk of fate such has been the irony of Muslim politics that such a saner voice as that of Maulana Azad fails to convince the Muslims of the dangers inherent in the creation of Pakistan while at the same time a thoroughly Europeanised, polished lawyer speaking a language of dangers, despair and impending doom, is able to sell his idea of Pakistan and yet could be the 'Qaid-e-Azam'! ■

MUSINGS

Journey's End

MRINAL PANDE

Photographs freeze strange moments for posterity; moments beyond the pale of words. One such image that lingers on in the mind is that of a dead man lying sprawled in a deserted street in Srinagar. Rilke's lines come to haunt you: "An empty-horrible alley, an alley in a foreign town, in a town where nothing is forgiven." A thin trickle of the nameless man's blood flows down to the edge of the photograph. This ultimate loneliness of a man's end is captured by someone who was doubtless being hurtled to the airport after the BJP supremo had unfurled the national flag under unprecedented security.

The only ones who look pleased in the photographs are the leaders of the *yatra*. Some even seem to raise their hands in benediction. Newspapers also reported the (post-unfurling) rhetoric that urged a putting down of terrorism with a firm hand and village by village combing operations, to flush out terrorists.

It is hard to believe that all terrorists in the Valley today are Pakistani infiltrators. It is even harder to believe that it is possible to suggest mowing down human beings thus, and smile. Is it the sound of the guns then that seems to have pleased those happy men? It is, one wonders further, a pleasure generated by mouthing what, to them, is a rational policy; or could it be a sentimental reaction to their own unacknowledged softness? Like the joy of children playing at being blood-thirsty pirates?

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AFTER twenty or thirty years

have passed, how will all those generators of joy and grief: those that have thus died, agitating for a separate nation or protesting against caste-based reservations, be remembered?

Perhaps they will be called "our misguided citizens". Perhaps it may even be said that a foreign hand was guiding them; a hand that wished to see India disintegrate and colluded with opportunistic political groups in the Opposition. Or perhaps a monument (or monuments) may be raised in memory of those who might be called selfless harbingers of liberalism and sanity. They might even be reclassified as counter-revolutionaries. Political and seminarist talk will centre around the then ruling party's mistakes, as if the death of so many were an absent-minded miscalculation.

Like sex, we Indians mostly do not like to talk about the incendiary mix of consumerism, caste and religion vis-a-vis terrorism and the state. In seminars and columns all talk about consumerism, casteism and communalism is couched in a socio-economic jargon. We choose to overlook the obvious; that those that died and are dying daily thus, are not mere socio-economic cliches; but impatient and vulnerable individuals with a name and an ethnic identity. Sometimes heroically idealistic, at others foolishly naive, these people are mostly those who have known nothing of politics, except the passions it excites.

We also need to face up to the ugly fact that the grand consumerist nostalgia for the past and a feudalisation of our upwardly-mobile young that is sweeping the country today, is also lending legitimacy to the extreme Right-wing advocacy of militancy and a view of the state as a strict patriach, *a la* the Hindu Puranas. The ethnic chic of Delhi's Hauz Khas Village and the bizarre ceremonials that the Toyota-riding *ekta* and *Ayodhya yatras* indulged in publically, are somewhere DNA-related. Few of our socio-economic analysts have, however, pointed out to the people that this cross-breeding of a feudal past and a Right-wing ideology is also very likely to have adverse economic consequences before long.

While our Prime Minister unleashes sweeping economic reforms; the social structure stays undeniably unchanged. A society that continues to idolise old family (as *khandan, kula* or a caste) background (and by implication family money) is bound to sneer at the hard money that comes through professional expertise, hard work and creativity—prerequisites for effective restructuring. This is why our vocational training institutes and skill-upgradation courses in the service sector continue to be allocated a very lowly status, while glimpses of immense arbitrary powers and the feudal lifestyle of the IAS officials and MPs continue to lure hundreds of professionals—professors, engineers and doctors, into the stronghold of colonial-style power. Sooner or later, this confusion of values is bound to show up in our GNP as well. Stories are aplenty already, about how when our senior managers and Ministers with their amateurish Raj and feudal yearnings have sat across negotiating tables with trade representatives from other countries their "officers and men" approach, and their aristocratic-disdain for, and their suspicion of, what to them is the "lowly *bania* culture of trade and commerce", has put most formidable road-blocks in the path to a just, civil and mutually cooperative exercise of give and take. A faulty mindset, not faulty policies or unfair trade restrictions, have mostly lost us valuable contracts and frittered away benefits and the NRI goodwill the country has needed so desperately all along.

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TO come back to the Valley, it is true that poverty and unemployment are major factors behind the present alienation of the local people, but we must remember that there have been worse poverty and unemployment in the past. Why is it that the droughts and famines of the sixties and the seventies did not lead to similar segregationist/terrorist outfits in Bihar and Madhya Pradesh? Or to the mental callousness that today prevents a large number of Indians from registering their protest at the daily sight of fellow-citizens lying shot dead in deserted alleys of our curfew-bound towns, like stray dogs.

If the *ekta yatra* has pointed out something positive, it is, one: that citizenship without community is empty rhetoric. Perhaps the real need today is not to use guns to protect 'public interest' but to try and build a society that embodies public interest. And two: the need for political settlements between the individual and the society to determine the rights and obligations on both sides.

One does not know, though, if this was something the *yatra* leaders had set out to explore. But then neither did Columbus, and look what he discovered! ■

Crowd Intervention in Indian History

An Overview of Popular Resistance Coterminus with the 1946 RIN Mutiny

ANIRUDH DESHPANDE

The fortysixth anniversary of the historic RIN mutiny fell on February 18, 1992. To mark the occasion the following article is being carried here. The article is based on the paper the author, a Research Scholar in the Centre for Historical Studies, School of Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, presented at an Informal Evening Seminar on South Asia, Lent Term 1992, at St John's College, Cambridge on January 9, 1992. —Editor

Kaam hai meraa taghayur,
Naam hai meraa shabab,
Meraa naara,
Inquilaab, inquilaab, inquilaab.
—verse by Josh Malihabadi sung by mutineers on board the 'Kathiawar' a rebel ship of 1946 (trans: My task is to change, my name being youth and my slogan is revolution).

Albert Soboul once wrote that the history of the French Revolution, that great watershed of modernity, would be incomplete without an analysis of the activities of the sans-culottes in it. And that meant complementing the exhaustive researches of Georges Le Febvre with more studies of urban crowds which invaded French history during the late eighteenth and most of the nineteenth century. Their's was a totalising mission even as individual scholars pursued different paths. As Soboul pointed out in his book *The Sans-Culottes* (Princeton, 1980), p. xvi:

> The French Revolution was a total phenomenon, stemming from a process that embraced every aspect of historical evolution. Its historiography reflects the movement of history; various aspects of the totality are revealed to successive historians who bring out new data previously concealed behind the enormity of the total phenomenon. Furthermore, the Revolution opened a number of possibilities: whenever a new one is brought to light, it reveals another aspect of the revolutionary past, thus enlightening the historian, and also the politician, if he has eyes with which to see.

Historical researches, informed in large measure by rigorous interdisciplinary approaches and historiographical disagreement, of scholars like LeFebvre, George Rude, Eric Hobsbawm and E.P. Thompson have added immensely to our knowledge of crowds in history. Crowds as definite identifiable social aggregates now appear composed of contextual individuals and not as abstract eternal 'mobs' comprising the omnipresent 'rubble' or 'riff-raff' to be harangued, swayed or ideologically constructed at will by outsiders. Such historiography analysing the composition of crowds, their tendencies and relation with extant social issues has enriched social history tremendously besides damaging the elite view of the 'mob' forever. The concentration of attention on the movement of the popular orders and their 'everyday' in societies passing through active and passive conflict is inspiring and places the problematic of 'agency' firmly on the historian's agenda.

◆

INDIAN historiography of 'popular protest' is new. Within it scholarship has tended to concentrate more on rural groups perhaps finding in them a remoteness that refreshes new and radical history writing in India. The search to redefine the past of the working classes, so long entrapped in trade union or labour history, is also yielding newer perspectives on working class lives, thought and action. The necessary logistics for crowd studies are thus being prepared but the urban crowd still awaits specific scrutiny. Crowds have been glanced at by writings on nationalist protest and communal riots in general. While in the former case, as depicted repeatedly in the official media, members of crowds dissolve into 'freedom fighters', in the latter case they appear as 'hooligans'. Crowds appear, fleetingly, submerged in the ranging controversies about the nature of Indian nationalism and its converse communalism.

In Indian history, specially after 1918, urban crowds became increasingly active in rising nationalist protest. The mass protest against the Rowlatt Bill and the following Non-Cooperation-Khilafat movement involved heterogeneous urban crowds in large measure. Conversely, crowds—perhaps with homogeneous compositions—were also associated with growing communalism and communal riots between peaks of nationalist agitations. Later during the Civil Disobedience movement and the Quit India upsurge, urban crowds were once again conspicuous. Indeed throughout the twentieth century, like the middle class, crowds have swung between the moments of nationalism and communalism in modern India. With urban and economic history growing and the focus of Indian social history shifting to working groups, the material for contextual monographs on crowds is now being forged. Hopefully, developing historical-sociology will identify the meaning, energy, will and the mental world of contemporary and historical urban crowds in the near future.

In social science today 'nation', 'nation-state', 'nationalism', 'communalism' and 'secularism' are no longer sacrosanct concepts. Fresh ground gets broken in historiography as riots and crowds, hitherto uncomfortable and painful aspects of our past and present, now become centrally important to any serious discussion on Indian mentalities. The time seems to have come to detach the crowd from the scheme of a deliberately sanitised nationalist discourse on the history of Indian society. The crowd with tremendous hidden potential can become one of the significant departing points in modern Indian historiography. Significantly, the new paradigms stressing the need to understand the will of a people, hitherto ignored by history, emanate from a radical critique of political ideology and, its academic corollary, historiography in the present.

The scope of this paper as a particle of Indian historiography is limited. It simply tries to understand crowd responses during the Royal Indian Navy (RIN) mutiny. No attempts are made to redefine mega concepts like nationalism. The paper also does not provide a chronological 'blow by blow' account of the RIN mutiny and for that readers could consult the references given in the endnote. At the same time we are not apologetic at all in treating the event of February 1946 as a great moment of celebration for popular and collective anti-colonial action. In the year 1945-46 nationalism appeared as a popular will to unitedly act against the British and all that they stood for. The long-standing ideology or programme of nationalism, supposedly leading India towards an independent nation-state, was *conspicuous by its absence in the arena where the real action lay*. In so many ways the great moment mirrored modern India where hope and despair paradoxically remain united to this day.

II

THE RIN mutiny of 1946 sparked off 'disturbances' in several Indian towns and various forms of popular resentment against the British rule were visible in the energetic crowd activity coterminus with the mutiny. The mutiny also inspired poetic passions with Saahir Ludhianwi writing the following on it:

> *Wo kaun saa jasbaa thaa jis-se farsooda nizaame zist hilaa,*
> *Jhulse hue viraan gulshan men ek aas-umeed ka phool khilaa,*
> *Janata kaa lahoo faujon se milaa,*
> *Faujon kaa lahoo janata se mila.*
> (A passion shook the crumbling system of life bringing a flower of hope to a parched garden as the blood of people and soldiers flowed together.)

Popular sentiment and rebellion supporting the RIN cause was influenced deeply by resurgent post-War nationalist mood focussed on the much analysed, publicised, represented and misrepresented Indian National Army (INA). The conjunctures which momentarily conditioned plebian interpretations of a nationalist message were also predicated upon the effects of the Second World War on Indian society. With an eye to the historical context of fractured Indian protest against colonialism this brief paper tries to understand certain aspects of post-Second World War 'popular protest' in India. First we see Bombay, the storm centre of the RIN revolt, and then follow it up with some comments on Karachi. Combined with a concluding remark these sections try *raising more questions about nationalism and crowds in general than answer them.*

The prelude to the uprising of February 1946 in Bombay was the serious anti-authority riot during the Subhas Bose Day celebrations signifying the extreme popularity of the INA issue. Bitter crowd-police confrontations between Janauary 23 and 25 left twenty two civilians dead and more than six hundred rioters injured. During these days rioting occurred mostly in the predominantly proletarian areas, notably Parel, Kalabadevi and Girgaon. The crowd, comprising middle class students, factory workers and large sections of the urban poor, who were hit hard by wartime conditions, reacted violently against symbols of foreign and state oppression including the police. Crowd action was meaningful and looting was confined to grain shops and places containing large sums of cash. Visibly rejoicing crowds forced the rich to abandon their vehicles and walk on the roads with them. At the same time, ties and hats, as symbols of British cultural domination, were snatched and often burnt in huge bonfires. Random crime against Indian middle class property or person was absent from the riot as the crowd carefully chose its targets even though theft had increased considerably during the War. Communal violence associated naturally with the crowd and ostensibly feared by leaders and authorities alike was absent even as crowds often broke away from half-hearted middle class leadership. Finally, to restore declining order, a harried police resorted to heavy and indiscriminate firing against largely unarmed crowds for almost two days. The invasion of the crowd into Bombay's 'normalcy' was marked by a specific pattern of crowd activity seen in the way the socially heterogeneous crowds stamped the city with their will, almost dictating terms to the state, between January 24 and 25, 1946.

◆

BETWEEN February 18 and 20, 1946, an unprecedented mutiny, surprising the state and the political parties, swept the RIN establishments and ships stationed in Bombay. The young mutineers using military transport successfully conveyed their intentions to the people of Bombay and the curious onlookers around naval establishments. Till February 19 the officials, underestimating the potentially explosive situation, allowed ratings free access to the city and the latter used this opportunity to address the message of a massive rebellion against the British to popular sensibilities in Bombay. Though the mixed crowds of Bombay became involved in the RIN mutiny on February 18 there was little indication that the initial curiosity would soon give way to an upheaval of unsurpassed magnitude. The astonishing speed with which a riot was converted into an uprising by the largely working class crowd is testimony to the fact that a tremendous popular anti-colonial will existed in Bombay in the beginning of 1946. On Februrary 20 as the rebels were confined to their establishments by the army, rumours about British excesses against them began to circulate. The next day large fraternising crowds led by students thronged the Gateway of India, bringing food for the rebels. As boats came in to collect the hampers the RIN ships flew the Congress, League and Communist flags together and this symbolic unity of Indians against the British profoundly affected popular perceptions of the event. The dialectical unity of the moment became clear soon as the crowds began to carry the three major flags bunched together.

On February 21 and 22 several moments of the RIN revolt combined to inspire a popular rebellion in Bombay. First in a day long skirmish between the British army and the mutineers casualties were reported. Then by evening the political isolation of the rebels became clear promoting the urgency felt by the swelling crowds who could hear but not see the firing taking place. Simultaneously Godfrey, the Flag Officer Commanding, RIN, went on air with his 'submit or perish' speech threatening the destruction of the RIN. Between February 19 and 21 heavy reinforcements had poured into Bombay signifying the importance of the event and stimulating popular sympathies for the RIN rebels. On February 22 the CPI called for a general strike the next day and even as the Congress opposed any disruption of normalcy, Communist and Socialist cadres held about fifty public meetings urging people to join the proposed *hartal*. Militant students combined and led a procession through the museum and fort areas with bystanders of all hues joining in large numbers. In the afternoon, deepening the sense of panic prevalent in the city, a Royal Air Force formation flew low over Bombay to intimidate the mutineers. An ultimatum publicising state intentions of using maximum force was also released to the press. In a city buzzing with extraordinary military activity rumours, justifiably deriving legitimacy from state actions and pronouncements, spread rapidly. The substantial presence of British personnel with tanks, armoured vehicles and automatic weapons indicated a major crisis and the collective mentality forged in the crowds by the moment believed, somewhat rationally, as an official report put it, that revolutionary changes were imminent. This fired the crowd's belief in a major engagement between the forces of order and rebellion. The point for the crowd's intervention had come as it launched a counter-mobilisation to oppose the might of the state.

On February 22 large crowds fired the first salvo by attacking jewellery stores, European commercial firms and business houses, government grain shops and petrol stations. Patrolling police parties and British soldiers were resolutely attacked particularly in the proletarian areas where the police had emerged since a long time as the most organised repressive force against the working class. Elsewhere, Europeans and vehicles carrying them were singled out for assault. A government in retreat declared a half holiday as the crowd came into its own, snatching the initiative totally from the students. The social content of protest became clear as the police parties which fired on crowds were hemmed in by hundreds of angry protestors. An alarmed media, unable to sift chaff from the grain, decried the 'goonda raj'.

◆

OVERNIGHT demonstrations of "turbulent crowds" were transformed into determined attacks on state property as the crowd imposed its will on the city. The government servants were often asked politely to leave before their offices were sacked. Later crowds vent their anger on the Europeans and Indians in Western attire who were often chased for long in the streets before their ties, hats and coats were taken away and burnt. Order broke down, transport was paralysed and the police proved totally inefficient. Even military vehicles wer often attacked and burnt and one large crowd even tried to move towards the Naval Headquarters. Police *chowkis* were torched with gay abandon and at least one whole patrol was stripped and paraded. In another widely reported incident a police inspector narrowly escaped being immolated due to the timely intervention of a local *dada*. By the evening, three weary and desperate British battalions had shot dead 97 people largely in the working class areas including Mrs Kamal Donde of the CPI and treasurer of the Parel Mahila Sangh. The hundreds of injured included Kusum Ranadive who was shot in the leg. The following day the police was replaced completely by the Essex, Leicestershire and Second Border regiments of the British army as the contest became more severe.

On Saturday February 23, as the mutineers surrendered and the major Indian political parties dissociated themselves from the violence raging in Bombay, the British army moved decisively against the crowd. Faced with armoured carriers and machine guns the crowds took to defence. Now comprising the working classes only, it shrank to the narrow pathways of the proletarian wards where the final pitched battles were fought on hurriedly erected barricades. In a ferocious street fighting about 200 Indians were killed and the British regiments could gain control over the city only by Sunday morning when the police gathered courage enough to move in and arrest hundreds. Between February 21 and 24, 64 grain shops were pillaged and an estimated 125,000 lbs of sugar was seized by the hungry crowds. On February 23, behind the barricades money lending establishments and provision shops were plundered by crowds comprising members of the working class and the urban poor. Whereas provision shops hoarded food and other necessities which had become scarce and expensive for the poor in 1945-46, the moneylenders' places contained cash and records of working class indebtedness.

The Bombay crowd, moved by the RIN mutiny, soon travelled far away from the modest goals of mobilisation and protest set by the student and Left cadres. A riot was swiftly converted into an uprising by the poor against the conditions imposed upon them by the War and all those played a significant part in perpetuating these conditions. The deeper meaning of crowd actions, involving extreme hatred of the police and symbols of the British rule, was located in the everyday life experience of the socially alienated and the politically disaffected working class of Bombay. The War had only sharpened the existing divisions in society, bringing internal contradictions to a point of resolution by collective crowd action. The entry of the Bombay crowd, with a history of organised working class protest, into the space created by the RIN rebels transformed the act of mutiny into a fierce popular uprising against colonial authority and its props. Significantly, throughout the event the meaning of crowd activity remained clear and crowds did not conform to the stereotype 'mob' so preferred by a bourgeois media, colonial authorities and political leaders alike. Finally, despite the extreme violence involved in the event and the socially heterogeneous composition of the crowds, communal tension was absent from crowd response.

In Karachi, identifiable crowds composed of discontented boatmen, fishermen, students, dockyard labourers, artificers and mechanics became sympathetically involved in the RIN mutiny from February 21 onwards. The next day they were addressed by the Congress and CPI leaders who soon retreated in the face of increasing crowd militancy. Street violence continued for two days in which symbols of British domination and state power were relentlessly attacked, and, wherever possible, destroyed. In several areas, the police and the military too were jeered and stoned by the crowds.

Historical research, informed by psychology, sociology and anthropology, indicates that such crowd actions occur in a continuum within which, as LeFebvre points out, the construction of a collective frame of mind precedes the event. The RIN mutiny was the moment which transformed post-War crowds, as everyday aggregates, into what is known as a 'state of crowd'. This was also visible in the crowd's will to overcome fragmented consciousness in an attempt, predicated upon hope, to transcend the limits imposed in everyday life by historical realities. In Karachi, too, military mobilisation against the rebels, specific geographical factors and the battle between the sloop 'Hindustan' and the British army stimulated popular passions creating the immediate ambience of riot. But even there, as we have tried to point out elsewhere, the mentality of protest was underlined by the socio-political context of the Second World War. The roots of crowd response were certainly well-entrenched. In Karachi, the movement of crowds did not become a flood because it lacked the canvas of Bombay. Nontheless, a shaken administration, despite forewarning, remained out of control for two days.

◆

IF crowd responses in Bombay and Karachi were socio-politically meaningful, even rumour, that motor of riot and protest, was contextual. We have seen how the atmosphere of Bombay during the revolt was conducive to the spread and popular acceptance of rumour. Perhaps due to the want of strong direction, with leaders dithering and then absenting, rumour as a relevant message created instant stories reflecting and fashioning popular belief at the same time in Karachi. The context of rumour was formed of its connection with state mobilisation against the rebels, the generation of collective political consciousness in the short term and the specific topography of Karachi. Rumour also forced information into conformity with collective mentality and unsubstantiated newspaper reports only helped this process by legitimising popular belief. Hence, as news and rumour became inextricably intertwined, the difference between orality and written messages was dissolved.

The element of panic infused in social assemblies by heavy troop deployment and firing also helped in making rumour the dominant form of communication between crowds in different areas. Similarly, rumours about Indian troops, especially Baluch soldiers with ethnic implications in Karachi, being sympathetic to the mutineers catered to the crowds' need for allies in a difficult situation. Here several factors in conjunction were creating the milieu of popular rebellion in post-War Indian cities. Inefficient post-War demobilisation, the drain of War and poor rains in 1945 and the well-orchestrated partisan Congress politics around the INA trails stimulated latent tendencies of protest in urban crowds as well as large sections of the armed forces in 1945-46. A pre-formed and hope-induced collective mentality in consonance with the moment of the RIN mutiny thus got created. Rumour hence came to be located in the popular belief that a massive movement against the British was imminent anytime in 1945-46. Thus the crowds identifying with the mutineers often carried the Congress, Communist and League flags bunched together *even expecting these parties to unite against the British.* This partially explains the largely 'secular' nature of popular rebellion attending the RIN mutiny.

The socially heterogeneous urban crowd favouring the INA and the RIN cause and rising for its own sake as well from the end of 1945 till February 1946 was anti-authority in action and; significantly, 'secular' in orientation. As the high tide of post-War nationalism swiftly declined after February 1946, popular moods began to swing from hope to despair and blame and consequently crowds became socially homogeneous and rioting increasingly communal. Thus the changing complexion of national politics became reflected in crowd composition and actions as much as in political shifts of middle class groups generally considered aware and socio-culturally sophisticated. In several ways, street rebellion in this specific period of Indian history reminds us of the anti-imperialist will characterising earlier popular nationalist unrest in colonial India. The Quit India, economic effects of a World War, the INA, problems of post-War demobilisation of the armed forces and the RIN mutiny were some aspects of the larger conjuncture characterising Indian history in much of the 1940s. Only when crowd responses, involving an undiscovered interpretation and message of protest, between September 1945 and March 1946 are studied as a complex outcome of these factors do we confront the force of popularised nationalism in everyday Indian life after the War. Nationalism in 1945-46 above ideology and programme became a message to act and the crowds responded enthusiastically. The specific importance of the crowd and the lessons we can draw from its moods and movement will be lost to historiography and posterity if 1945-46 is treated either as just another year in the overarching 'transfer of power' or a hurriedly assembled last chapter in a 'history of modern India'.

III

THE RIN mutiny involved about 30,000 ratings and almost all the naval establishments and ships. Geographically spread over the whole subcontinent, popular reactions to it varied. In smaller towns where far flung establishments struck work peacefully usually students demonstrated in support. In Calcutta, where the INA proved popular, students led solidarity moves. In Karachi, where the INA issue had energised an anti-British mood the brave ratings provoked a long riot within which as the crowd became more assertive the intervening leaders and students retreated. In Bombay, the stronghold of Quit India, the mutiny symbolised *a majority against imperialism,* also because Bombay boasted a history of working class struggles before and during the Second World War. An embattled and concentrated working class combined with the INA emotion and the February mutineers to launch the last heroic uprising against the British. Even in Bombay, the initial involvement of crowds could not be 'organised'. Soon the crowd seized the initiative and later, in defence of freedom, won fleetingly, barricades in working class neighbourhoods were erected. ■

Author's Note

This paper is based largely on my unpublished M. Phil dissertation 'The Royal Indian Navy Uprising and Popular Protest, 1946', submitted to the Centre for Historical Studies, School of Social Sciences, JNU, New Delhi, under the supervision of Dr. Majid Hayat Siddiqui, in October, 1987. Readers interested in details about Karachi can see Anirudh Deshpande, 'Sailors and the Crowd: Popular Protest in Karachi, 1946' in *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Jan-March issue, 1989. A detailed account of the RIN revolt is also to be found in the following books: B.C. Dutt, *Mutiny of the Innocents*, Bombay, 1971; S. Banerjee, *The RIN Strike*, PPH, 1954, New Delhi, 1981; and Satyindra Singh, *Under Two Ensigns*, New Delhi, 1985.

It is on the Kashmir soil, that Islam and Hinduism are being weighed now. If both pull their weight correctly and in the same direction, the chief actors will cover themselves with glory and nothing can move them from their joint credit. My sole hope and prayer is that Kashmir should become a beacon light to this benighted subcontinent.

MKGandhi

(December 29, 1947)

SAH BROTHERS

603/4 "NIRANJAN" 6th Floor
99, Netaji Subhash Road
Bombay 400 002

The Reporter who came in from the Cold

ASHUTOSH

Where does India exist in the Kashmir Valley? The time has come when this seemingly absurd question needs to be asked objectively and investigated in its totality. This writer was in the Valley for more than a week and could not locate a place there, either at the existential level or at the epistemological one, where one could sense the existence of the sovereign Indian state, as we know it.

We were told that Kashmir is a heaven on earth. Heaven it is but it now debars all outsiders from 'India' with a grim and sort of determined politeness. The non-violent *samaskaras* have seeped through the Kashmiri psyche but today with fire in their eyes, children of Laldad (a woman Sufi saint) and Hamir Kabir (founder of Islam in Kashmir) have taken to arms and even ten year olds can be heard swearing by their motherland that they should sacrifice lives for Kashmir. *'Ham Bharat ke gulam hain, Hamen Azadi chahiye, kaum ke vaste'* (We are slaves of India, we want freedom, for our society).

Abdul Rashid, a Class VI student, has seen his brother shot in the legs by the security forces. He was looking after his brother in the hospital when we asked him: "What do you want? To go to Pakistan?" He replied; "No, *azadi.*" "How will you get it?" "Through arms." "Did you use them?" "No. But I would love to. They (militants) don't allow us." "Aren't you afraid of dying?" "Why? I will die for my *kaum.*" Abdul Rashid is not the only child of his kind; others of his age are now echoing the general mood in Kashmir.

Since one-and-a-half years ago, when Jagmohan had just left his *Frozen Turbulence* and Gary Saxena had taken over from him, the situation has deteriorated from bad to worse from India's point of view. One hears gun-shots more often in the Valley. The number of bunkers have increased enormously in the city specially in 'Down-Town' area in the old city of Srinagar. What is amazing is the new atmosphere of casual defiance in the Valley. Earlier one saw how cross-firing could frighten the Kashmiris for a day or two. One shot fired was enough for the closure of the entire market. Now even if someone is killed (security men, militants, civilians) within half-an-hour life becomes normal, market shutters are put up. People have learned to live with terror and bullets. Many friends confirmed this, and said: "When we go out, we and our family members are not sure whether we will be back... we are not bothered."

But it will still not be justified if one were to state that the entire population approves of the militants' way of struggle. There is a microscopic minority in the Valley who still believes that arms cannot produce a lasting solution. They agree sadly that they lost the initiative and goodwill within and without, the moment their boys decided to launch an armed movement. The logic is simple: when Palestine could not achieve independence despite worldwide sympathy how can we, the juvenile militants, do? The militants counter this angrily: "Yes, we also know the creative power of *ahimsa,* the might of the Gandhian *lathi,* but we are living in an age where might is right. Gandhi could muster a victory for India because he was dealing with the British who are traditionally an intelligent race. India, in contrast, has from the beginning imposed its security forces on our heads. How can one talk of peace to a man with a gun?"

Microscopically discovered, this section of the society feels that India can win Kashmir through love, not by guns. They categorically state that some saner elements are still there but they need to be protected, preserved and encouraged. These elements are apprehensive of Islamisation of Kashmir and its merger with Pakistan. But they also want a liberated democracy after gaining independence. Alas! no one listens to their voice in the Valley. Neither do they have the guts to open their mouth in public.

◆

LIKE the citizens, the Jammu and Kashmir police and the local bureaucracy are also either sympathetic to the cause of *Azadi* or plainly afraid of openly siding with India. We were told that the police and local bureaucracy voluntarily and regularly pay part of their salaries to the militants. This is one reason that to date no police vehicle has been ambushed or any squad attacked and killed by the militants except those who happened to be informers or were suspected of helping the Indian security forces. The author felt much safer in the company of an old bearded J&K police driver than in a BSF truck, being escorted by four lorries of jawans holding automatic weapons. This fact is also known to the higher ups there. They agreed that to be safe in the Valley is to be with either the JKP or the militants. For those aware of this it was not surprising that the DGP's office in the Police Headquarters was blown up in Srinagar. Planting a bomb is the easiest thing to do in Srinagar because of the sympathetic JKP. The newly appointed DGP, B.S. Bedi, has rightly demanded for his own team to work in the Valley.

Obviously, the targets of militants in the Valley are the BSF, the CRPF and the Army who have no trust in the local police and bureaucracy. Even senior officials are thoroughly checked five-six times while coming from their residence to the office. Ordinary curfew passes issued by the DM or the police have no meaning for the security forces, specially, the army. They insist on the passes issued by their own officers.

Army and police officials are also the targets of the media and human rights organisations who constantly blame them for killing innocents and raping Kashmiri women. Reacting to these charges one army jawan said: "We are also humans. We work 18 hours a day. We do not know the local dialect. People despise us like pigs. They don't support us in nabbing militants. We are fired at from windows, from roof-tops. Naturally we reply in kind. How can we know who is a terrorist and who is not? When I'm fired at, at that time my prime duty is to save myself and my colleagues. What would you do if you were in my place?" Another jawan said to us: "*Sahib,* when we go for searches in the houses of militants, we are told by the inhabitants to crawl under piles of bedding and then their women are told to sleep upon those piles. Now you tell us, what can we do? If we remove them physically they cry rape and accuse us of playing with their bodies. If we don't, we suffer the wrath of our officers and the stigma of incompetence."

It is true that these jawans are on duty round the clock except for four hours with a meagre salary of two thousand rupees including allowances, be it rain or snow. When everyone sleeps in –2°C at night, they are awake under the sky, always under threats of bullets or rocket attacks.

On attrocities, another jawan said: "We are asked to act with restraint and not to fire back. Sometimes we are told to produce ***khokhas*** (fired bullets). How's it possible? *Ham apni jaan bachayen ya khokha khoje* (should we save our lives or look for *khokhas*)?" There is another complain: "We catch militants without caring for our lives but they are set free to save their (politicians') sons and daughters. And we unnecessarily antagonise militants." "*Sahib, imandari ki baat hain ham desh sewa karne nahi aye, apne bachcho ka pet palne aye hain* (honestly speaking, we are not here for the sake of patriotism but to feed our children). Is this the way to play with our lives?"

At this point the alienation of the security forces in the Valley seems almost total. In a Marxist framework they are not only alienated from the masses, from the JKP and local bureaucracy but also from their work, except from their colleagues. As one jawan said: "This is our 90 per cent home." Indicating other jawans, he said: "We are more than brothers."

Fortunately or unfortunately, such are the conditions under which India exists in the Kashmir Valley today. Only those who unfurl the Tricolour in the Valley in thirteen minutes time and shout "*Bharat Mata Ki Jai*", can be blind to the state of affairs in the freezing Valley. ■

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Federalism and Nation-building in India

R.C. DUTT

The tumultuous events of 1991, apart from the implications they carry in political, economic and social spheres, and the worldwide repercussions they may have, have highlighted two important trends in human affairs: One is the centrifugal trend which emphasise separate identities based on religious, linguistic and cultural variations, and the other the centripetal, born out of political and economic imperatives. The former has undoubtedly been stronger in recent years, specially in the erstwhile socialist states, but the latter force has also been at work not only in Western Europe but in various other regions and areas of interest too, where efforts to project collective identities continue.

What are the catalysts that unleash these forces? Why have attempts to build up states failed so disastrously at least for the present, in the Soviet Union and in Yugoslavia? Could these failures have been avoided, and if so, how? What is the mix of policies that would balance the centripetal and centrifugal forces and lead to the ideal solution?

Federal India—A Design for Change by Prof Rasheeduddin Khan; Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd.; pp. 146 including appendices and bibliography; Rs 150.

Recent events not merely raise these questions but provide ample materials for their study. They will indeed be eagerly studied; for they are relevant to all countries which have a variety of cultural groups with differing identities, actual or potential. For a country like India, with her multiplicity of religions, languages and cultural patterns, the relevance is obvious. India has already embarked on the path of forging unity out of her diversity by emphasising the common identity which has always underlined her variety. The question is whether she is on the right path to achieve this unity.

◆

TO answer this question a study has appeared from so erudite a scholar as Prof Rasheeduddin Khan at a moment which, on account of the developments referred to, could not have been more opportune than the present. The book was indeed published before the developments in the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia took their present shape, but there were ample indications of these developments which could be taken into account.

The author is fully aware of the dangers of outlining a design for change in social affairs which recent events in the Soviet Union have emphasised, for he states in his Prologue (p. 2) that "sometimes events acquire momentum neither anticipated nor apprehended by those who generate change". Little did Gorbachev "anticipate or apprehend" that *perestroika* and *glasnost* that he had initiated would result in the complete dismemberment of the Soviet Union. And yet, as Prof Khan rightly points out, this cannot be taken as a counsel for inaction or for cynical indifference, "leading to acceptance of the *status quo* as the unchanging destiny of human life". But it does counsel great caution, and it is in this light that the suggestions made by Prof Khan need to be viewed.

The basic thesis advanced by Prof Khan is that India is a *federal nation* whose hallmark is "unity of polity and plurality of society". (p. 29) It is not, he further contends, a multinational state as the Soviet Union was, nor a multi-ethnic state as the United States is. Its variations are region specific, he argues, and so India must be regarded as an instance of multi-regional federation. This latter proposition is, however, not so evident because not only the main religious communities, the Hindus, the Muslims and the Christians are found in most regions, but even the tribes, the *adivasis* as they are called, are strewn all over the country, interspersed among non-tribal population. The fact that they tend to live in groups does not make them region specific.

An important distinction drawn by Prof Khan is between the "melting pot" of ethnic differences that the United States is and a "bouquet" that a federal nation should be. (p.30) The distinction is valid, and Prof Khan is right that the Indian approach can only be the latter. Having accepted this, it must at the same time be pointed out that Indian history has been one of cultural assimilation. From the dawn of history hordes of invaders—the Aryans, the Sakas, the Huns, the Pathans and the Moghuls—have descended on the country, and to a large extent been assimilated to produce a composite culture. This process of assimilation cannot be forced, but at the same time it should not be obstructed. It should, on the other hand, be encouraged. The "bouquet" concept must, therefore, be accompanied by an awareness of its limitation, and provide for safeguards in its application.

Prof Khan rightly observes that the "very survival and preservation of the democratic culture in India, in the four decades of its existence as a sovereign republic, remains the biggest source of strength of the people, providing opportunity for constructive change and better achievements in the future". (p. 34) What follows from this is that the basic concepts underlying the sovereign republic must not only be preserved but made acceptable to the masses. Perhaps the most important concepts in this respect are (i) that the Union is indestructible, and (ii) loyalty to the Union must supersede other types of loyalties, to region, religion, language or caste. The most important task, therefore, is to propagate these concepts. Construction of a new federal balance in India is necessary only to the extent that it contributes to this task.

To construct a new federal balance, however, Prof Khan has suggested four measures. They are:

(i) Territorial reorganisation of States on the basis of maximum homogeneity within and maximum identity without;
(ii) Amendment of the Constitution for increasing the autonomy of the States;
(iii) Activisation of the *Panchayati Raj* and *Nagarpalika* system; and
(iv) Building a new federal-national consensus to fight communalism, casteism and separation and to defend the values of democracy, secular polity, federal nation-building and social justice. (p. 34-35)

While the last measure is entirely unexceptionable, and should indeed be the first and most important measure to be undertaken, the other three measures need words of caution, and indeed careful consideration.

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PROF Khan is of the view that having reorganised the States on the basis of linguistic homogeneity the stage "has now arrived in which we have to go from large, administratively unwieldly, politically troublesome and economically unequal though linguistically homogeneous States to a more rational reorganisation based on the principles of techno-economic viability, socio-cultural homogeneity, administrative and political manageability". (p. 40) There is undoubtedly force in the argument that a large and unwieldly State like Uttar Pradesh is not only difficult to administer but functions from a centre of power that is remote from the lives of the great mass of the people. There could, therefore, be little participation of the people in the acts of governance, such participation being restricted only to the exercise of such powers as are devolved on the *panchayats*. It may also be conceded that socio-cultural homogeneity, by avoiding conflicts, makes for harmonious development, but it cannot be overlooked that it also impedes the natural process of assimilation, which can be encouraged only by close proximity of different cultural forms. Nothing, for instance, aids national integration more than comradeship of persons drawn from different parts of the country in the armed forces, or, for that matter, in national all-India projects. On the contrary, "maximum identity without", one of the criteria proposed for reorganisation of the States carries the danger of identities being developed narrowly and being projected to conflict with other identities. It also carries the danger of endless demands being made of changes in the States' boundaries, if not of further subdivision, on the basis of narrow loyalties. A division of the southern part of West Bengal from which the present writer originates, for instance, into two States on the basis of no pronounced cultural variations except existence of tribal belts in one of them only emphasises distinctions where none exist.

The next suggestion made by Prof Khan is that the Constitution should be suitably amended to increase the autonomy of the States. The desirability of making the States as autonomous as possible is not denied, but before the Constitution is amended the basic scheme of the Constitution needs to be considered. This scheme is that while wide powers may be given to the States, the Centre should have reserve powers to call the States to order either when these powers are exercised in a manner which undermines the values of the Constitution, or when an emergency arises which calls for firm action by the Centre. Emergency apart, this is the rationale for the power reserved to the Centre to dismiss State Governments. It is also the rationale for reserving certain laws passed by the State Legislatures for approval of the President. These powers have undoubtedly been abused by the Centre, but the question is whether such powers should be governed by conventions as has indeed been recommended by the Sarkaria Commission, or they should be abolished altogether by an amendment of the Constitution. The latter course is open to danger, as can indeed by illustrated from the present situation. The BJP Government in Uttar Pradesh, for instance, may, under pressure from Hindu fundamentalists or otherwise, embark on a course of action at Ayodhya or elsewhere which grievously harms the secular character of the Constitution. Should the Centre look helplessly on and not protect the Constitution?

The reason for reserving such powers to the Centre is not because the Centre is constituted by men wiser or more loyal to the Constitution than the States, but because the Centre by its very composition with persons drawn from various cultural and religious groups is more likely in its collective judgement to maintain the balance which the Constitution calls for.

The Sarkaria Commission has, by and large, restricted its recommendations to the basic scheme of the Constitution. They, therefore, deserve earnest consideration. It is difficult to agree with the author that the recommendations of the Commission, "even if accepted and implemented, would still leave much to be desired in creating an authentic federal polity". (p. 55) The further recommendations listed by Prof Khan to the extent that they go beyond the scheme of the Constitution, deserve to be rejected summarily on this account.

The third important suggestion of Prof Khan is to activate the *Panchayati Raj* and *Nagarpalika* system. There would be general agreement with his view that "what is required is a national consensus of the political parties and social forces to use the Panchayati Raj as an instrument for deepening democratic consciousness and for carrying forward at least a part of the unfinished task of social change and social justice". (p. 66) I am sure, however, he will agree that this task, namely, that of social change and social justice, can be accomplished only if devolution to panchayats is accompanied, if not preceded, by measures to ensure that the poor and the lowly are freed from the clutches of the "higher caste" landlords and moneylenders. The nauseating frequency with which atrocities are still being committed on the *Harijans* do not indicate that this has happened. In the present conditions there is a danger of the Panchayati Raj becoming one more instrument for denying the benefits of development to those for whom they should primarily be meant.

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WITH all the criticism advanced above, however, the fact remains that Prof Rasheeduddin Khan has rendered a signal service by initiating a debate on Federal India. This service is all the more valuable as it comes from a person who ardently believes in the values of democracy, secularism and social justice on which our Constitution rests. He also believes in "a healthy reconciliation between regionalism and nationalism", and is of the opinion that "like chauvinism, unhealthy regional or sub-regional patriotism is equally cancerous and disruptive". (p. 84) His vision indeed extends to regional groupings which transcend nation-states because, as he points out, the demands of modern market economy, the requirements of technology and the necessary cultural inputs "cannot be adequately available just in one country, nor their benefits, as the economies of scale are not restricted to single sovereignties". (p. 88)

With this outlook there can be no difference. Differences can still be there about the means to achieve this vision. These need to be discussed. "In the decade of the nineties," as he puts in the Epilogue (p. 89), "there is need for a vigorous, informed and enlightened discussion about the central concept of Federal India." So indeed there is, and one can only hope that Prof Khan's book will not only be widely read, but equally widely discussed to achieve the required consensus. The views expressed by him on devolution and decentralisation representing, as it does, the views of a large section of the people, will, one hopes, be taken up in a serious debate that he has initiated.

The task of nation-building is by no means complete in India. The primordial instincts of regionalism and linguism, which have overwhelmed the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia and dismembered them, do exist in India too. The danger from these forces cannot be discounted. The primordial instincts cannot and should not be suppressed. All cultural forms, all languages and all religious beliefs should be allowed not only to exist but flourish, but care should be taken that they do not conflict and lead to separatism. That way lies fragmentation, and consequent stagnation, for progress in the modern world, economic, technological and even cultural, depends to a large extent on the scale of operation. A balance needs to be struck, and such a balance can only emerge out of a Great Debate which, hopefully, Prof Rasheeduddin Khan's present volume will initiate. ■

MAHAPATRA: Economy

(Continued from page 4)

impact of the speculative forces such as flooding the public distribution system (PDS), resorting to administrative clampdown on the hoarders, etc. Instead the government chose to do just the opposite. It raised the procurement prices in spite of the negative anticipations regarding the kharif output; signed up contracts in the name of self-sufficiency to export rice and wheat; and pushed through measures that would provide impetus to the food processing industry. As if this was not enough, it went for a hike in the issue prices in the month of December. On a point to point basis, grain prices in December 1991 ruled 23 per cent higher than those in the same month in the preceding year.

In an inflationary situation, the poor not only pays a higher price for what he buys, but looses an additional part of his real income to the rich, for inflation is a merciless redistributer of income in favour of the profit earning or the rentier class as against the wage earning class.

To make things worse, the economy was hit by a recession. Industrial production registered almost a zero growth rate. Some sectors like manufacturing, mining and quarrying even registered a negative growth rate. Adequate public investment could have been some answer to this problem. But the real impetus to public investment was missing for a long time. The fiscal profligacy of the eighties had helped the consumer goods industry to flourish in a big way. Now, with the era of fiscal profligacy gone, strict import curbs and a severe credit crunch arising from a tight monetary policy had made things difficult for the industry; more so for the small scale industries who depend on the institutional source of credit. This would mean closing down of an ever increasing number of sick units and a large scale retrenchment of labour. As the media reports about the government's plan of offering a "golden handshake" to the personnel guarding those departments that have now been rendered unproductive, the private sector is already bidding farewell to its employees that include even persons in executive rank. The real rate of growth of the GDP has fallen far short of expectations. Reports from the official quarters suggest that it may go down to 1.5 to two per cent in the current financial year—half of what was earlier expected at the time of the Budget. Real incomes are falling. For the common man there is no relief in sight.

So much for fiscal discplining. Even on this front the Finance Minister seems to have got all his numbers wrong. No wonder, the North Block appears to be more busy in adjusting the revised figures for the fiscal year of 1991-1992 than in preparing for the forthcoming Budget. Till the end of December, the customs collection fell short of the projected figures by Rs 3613 crores. With a marginal increase of 0.6 per cent in the excise collection, the overall decline could be of the order of Rs 3000 crores. Then Rs 2000 crores was the loss on account of the sudden distruption in trade between India and the Soviet republics. In a desperate bid to contain the fiscal deficit to Rs 39,000 crores (the adjusted figure), the government has finally opted for the much feared cut in outlays for the social sector Outlays for the subsectors of rural development and housing were slashed down by Rs 500 crores each.

As of now, the objectives that were set out six months back stand defeated. The journalist's apprehension of being trapped in the margin for error has come true. Nor has India become a better place for most of its inhabitants. The commitment of the country's political leadership to the WB-IMF duo has proved stronger than the government's accountability to the people at home. Yet the Prime Minister has the gumption to say: "There is a humane way to everything that is done in India", and the Finance Minister admittedly maintains: "The impact of the adjustment process is bound to be painful for sometime...but the gains would soon start to trickle down."

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IS it too late to ask if there is any other way out—a way that would rescue the country out of the current economic mess, a path that would ensure allround growth of the economy without asking the poor to pay the heaviest price and above all a strategy that would not make us surrender our economic sovereignty to the vested interests outside the nation? The answer is in the affirmative. It is not a too late. It is in this context that the forthcoming Budget could mark a fresh beginning by redefining the agenda for macromanagement in the days to come.

The imperative is to formulate the right kind of fiscal policy that would simultaneously tackle the problem of inflation as well as check the recessionary trend. This would call for raising revenue through methods that are non-inflationary in their impact and, on the other hand, not resorting to any cut in capital expenditure. This can be done even while meeting the fiscal deficit target of five per cent of the GDP in the year 1992-93 which is projected at Rs 32,500 crores. Going by the government's past record (or, for that matter, the experience of the Latin American economies), to argue for a cut on the expenditure side would be tantamount to

COMMUNICATION

Remembering Hamdi Bey

Thank you for reprinting from *Newstime* Sashi Sahay's tribute to Hamdi in *Mainstream* (December 14, 1991).

I knew Hamdi for nearly 25 years. For the better part of my stay at Guwahati I was very close to him (that is, till he was transferred to Lucknow) and during the first few years in *Aaj Kaal*, we were colleagues in the same paper. Indeed, it was Hamdi who insisted on my joining *Aaj Kaal*.

His qualities both as a journalist and a human being far outweighed his vices. There are many saucy stories about his drinking habits. But what made Hamdi different from others was that he never lost his thinking faculties.

I remember one incident. It was a cold winter night at Guwahati. Hamdi had been drinking since the evening. By eleven in the night when he was totally drunk, the teleprinter bell rang. There was a request from *The Statesman* office in Calcutta to send, then and there, an analytical piece on some fresh developments in Nagaland.

Hamdi told me: "I cannot type. You sit at the teleprinter. I will dictate, you type." Walking unsteadily he came near the TP machine, and stood leaning against the wall. And started dictating. It was a superb piece that he dictated. And it was carried by *The Statesman* the next day. This was Hamdi. Others in his place would have, by then, soiled their clothes and gone into a stupor.

I remember another incident. A request came from *The Statesman* editorial department that some articles on different aspects of Assam's life should be obtained from some specialists. Some specific names were mentioned. Hamdi wanted to know what would be the rate of payment to the authors before he approached them for articles.

The editorial reply was that the articles should be sent first and "if found suitable" these would be published and "suitable payments" made. Hamdi flew into a fit of rage. "What do these... (he used an expletive) think they are?" he burst out. And I found him sending a caustic reply on the TP which began with the sentence:

> These men are eminent people in their respective fields. They will not cast their specialised pearls before the editorial swine unless they know that what they write will be published and be paid for.

Only Hamdi could dare do this and get away with it.

486 Dum Dum Park
Calcutta-700055

Barun Dasgupta

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legitimising the idea of cutting down the expenditure on social overheads. In fact what should be emphasised is an increasing outlay for the social sector and a proportionate cut in the non-Plan expenditure, thereby retaining the same total expenditure level.

Assuming that the fiscal deficit in 1992-93 would have gone upto Rs 43,000 crores otherwise, the government needs to raise an additional amount of Rs 10,000-11,000 crores on its revenue front if any cut is ruled out on the expenditure side. Broadening the direct tax base through simplification of the existing tax structure and administrative clampdown on tax evaders and tax avoiders constitutes the answer. Treating the family rather than the individual as a taxing unit, taxing at source, evaluating property tax on the basis of "site and services' value are some of the, so to suggest, concrete measures in this regard.

It is very unfortunate that only 0.7 per cent of the country's population pay taxes, and the country has one of the highest marginal rates of taxation. It is rather tragic to learn that a lotterywala or a bidi factory owner remains as the highest tax payer, while the corporate doyens lobby for a relaxation in corporate tax rates. The underworld man is given "three cheers" when he disburses a meagre amount of his wealth into the real money market and the farmer is asked to pay a higher price for his inputs, for he has been a free rider so far. This trend needs to be earnestly reversed. Some estimates suggest that the amount of black money is about Rs 1,80,000 crores. If one-fifth of this amount is tapped and taxed accordingly, the Finance Minister's commitment regarding the fiscal deficit can be fulfilled. This will not only contribute to bridging the fiscal gap but also be non-inflationary in its impact. If Dr Singh could push through his radical measures of liberalising the economy in the existing political environment, he can do this too. It is disheartening to learn of the "informal constraints" that have crept into many of our senior economists' calculations who suggest otherwise, for the above mentioned framework is not compatible with the existing political structure.

If the latter is indeed the case then it is time for the political parties to give precedence to the political agenda over the agenda for macro-management. It is time to change the pilot in the cockpit. Towards this end, the parties in Opposition should vote against the government in the ensuing Parliament session if the Budget proposals fail to represent the interests of the majority of the country's populace. ■

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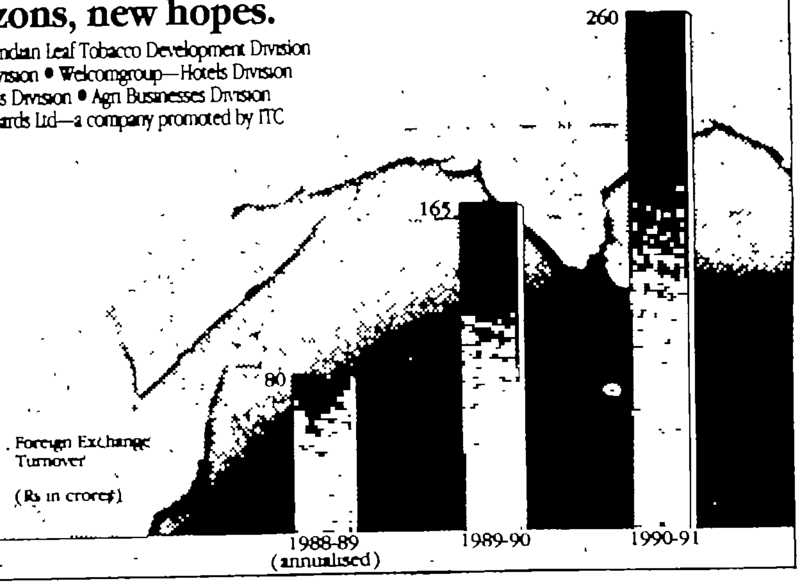

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Railway Budget ● *Chandra Shekhar on Economic Reforms*

Mainstream

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POLITICAL NOTEBOOK

Shameful !

The Union Finance Minister's response in Parliament to the Opposition members' serious allegations hurled against him on the basis of a specific report in the influential daily, *Indian Express*, has established the fact that the World Bank was indeed involved in blatant interference in this country's policy-making processes This is undoubtedly a matter of utter shame for the Indian nation, one of the striking features of whose significant advance in domestic and international affairs has all along been pursuance of independent policies based on freedom of judgement. The assumption of Dr Manmohan Singh to the post of the Union Finance Minister has given a go-by to that independence on which rests the sovereignty of our nationhood. This is the most ignominious development related to the so-called structural adjustment programme that the Finance Ministry is carrying out in the name of 'globalisation' at the behest of the World Bank and the IMF

There are two aspects of the present controversy The first is connected with the issue of Budget leak' as a result of the correspondence between Dr Manmohan Singh and the World Bank (that is, the Finance Minister's "Letter of Development Policy" to the Bank dated November 11, 1991 requesting for a $500 million loan that embodies several commitments to the World Bank, and the 43-page reply from the World Bank President, Lewis T Preston, dated November 12, 1991 recommending the loan to India while laying down 25 conditions which the Government of India is expected to meet by April-May this year) This point has been forcefully projected in the Lok Sabha by all sections of the Opposition with members openly charging the Finance Minister with such a grave breach of privilege The Finance Minister's reply only confirmed the charge.

But the second issue is no less noteworthy. It pertains to the open dictation of terms and conditions to the Government of India by the Fund-Bank that the Finance Ministry and its head do not regard as an affront to the nation. Dr Manmohan Singh could have, without in any way divulging anything related to the 1992-93 Budget proposals he is due to present in Parliament on February 29, categorically underscored that regardless of the 25 conditionalities referred to in the aforementioned letter of the World Bank President, the Government of India would take decisions on its own on the specific measures suggested. His inability to do so has strengthened suspicions in the public mind that the steps underlined in the World Bank chief's correspondence were actually being implemented This really amounts to mortgaging the country to the foreign moneylender.

The conditionalities are, in short, so humiliating that no self-respecting nation can ever stomach them. The basic thrust of these conditions, *inter alia*, is directed against the public sector Imagine a multilateral financial institution based in Washington ordering New Delhi "to implement the initial phase of an action plan to eliminate within three years (that is, by the end of fiscal year 1994-95) budgetary transfers and loans to sick central public sector enterprises. "; to finalise and approve the "detailed programme for disinvestment of 20 per cent of equity in selected public enterprises, to yield Rs 25 billion", and to complete execution of this programme by the end of 1991-92, to "progressively increase the private equity share in profitable central public enterprises to 49 per cent within three years". What is

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the *locus standi* of the World Bank to lay down such terms? Simply because the Fund-Bank is extending loans to us?

Dr Manmohan Singh would have won kudos from the nation as a whole if he would have himself released these conditionalities way back in November last and declared his rejection of such terms—as was done by T T Krishnamachari with regard to the then World Bank President Eugene Black's clamours for rupee devaluation in the sixties But he has done just the opposite. Even when the issue of the IMF loan was being debated in Parliament last December, the Finance Minister kept silent on the Bank's conditions. By so doing he devalued the august office he has been currently holding.

The role of the Opposition in the entire episode, as reflected in its vociferous protests in Parliament, is in full conformity with the public mood in India. Gauging that mood the Congress ranks are equally shocked by Dr Manmohan Singh's misconduct The Indian people never forgave those who sold the country in 1757 The same fate awaits anyone seeking to bring back in independent India the new breed of Sahab Bahadurs, this time from the banks of the Potomac

The Mirzaffars cannot have the last laugh The nation's sovereignty cannot be mortgaged.

February 25 S.C

RAILWAY BUDGET

A Harsh Deal for All Passengers

S. SETHURAMAN

The Railway Minister C K. Jaffer Sharief, has the dubious distinction of delivering a massive blow on rail users with an all-time record of Rs 1366 crores by way of revision of fares and freight through his Budget for 1992-93.

The Railways can certainly have a sense of pride on their overall performance, and the finances are reasonably in good shape While the investment needs of the Railways for the future are huge, and transport is one of the most vital sectors of the economy which cannot be neglected, for the fifth consecutive year the tariff structure has been arbitrarily revised without providing any rationale for the increases.

Year after-year, the Railways keep talking of "social burdens" they are supposed to be carrying to justify the sharp rises in fares and freight, and yet, they are ending up with surpluses and the growth trends in both freight and passenger traffic have remained buoyant.

It is true that restructuring of fares and freight every year adds up to gross traffic receipts strengthening Railway finances but there are no corresponding gains in efficiency in services With an expanding base of the economy, the Railways were able to lift an additional 74 million tonnes of freight during the Seventh Five Year Plan and in 1991-92, the increase is estimated at 19 million tonnes The Budget for 1992-93 assumes another 17 million tonne increase in freight to a total of 354 million tonnes in revenue earning traffic and a five per cent rise in passenger traffic which, by themselves, should generate more revenue so that the stiff increases in fares and freight could have been held down somewhat.

Roughly, fifty per cent of the additional yield of Rs 1366 crores would come from passenger traffic, which is made up of 75 per cent of second class travellers, excluding surburban services It is this class, by no means affluent, that is being fleeced every year. Of course, passenger fare increases are non-inflationary and the Railways continue to indulge in the propaganda of increases made being "minimal"

Taking the three Railway Budgets 1990-91 to 1992-93, the long-distance second class passengers have been made to pay a total increase of Rs 70 or more per ticket. For upper class passengers, George Fernandes, the then Finance Minister (who did not spare second class passengers either), came up with a 17 per cent increase in 1990-91 and Jaffer Sharief has followed up with a 20 per cent increase each in two successive budgets He cannot wait for the recommendations of the Railway Fare and Freight Committee which he set up last year

The freight rates were revised by seven per cent from April 1, 1990, by 10 per cent in 1991-92 and now by another 7.5 per cent excluding certain essential commodities. The tariff increase on coal is only four per cent "in order to contain the inflationary pressures in the economy". Sharief's freight increases will have no bigger impact on the wholesale price index than 0.074 per cent, according to the Railway Board officials. Unlike the Railway Board, the Finance Ministry concedes that revision of administered prices and tariffs is a contributory factor for high inflation.

Even with such steep levies designed to leave a record surplus of Rs 563 crores in 1992-93, the Railways do not promise much for the year ahead The Railway Plan for the year is fixed at Rs 5700 crores as against Rs 5325 crores in 1991-92—which means no increase in real terms—but the budgetary support will further come down from Rs 1694 crores to Rs 1200 crores for 1992-93 while the balance will have to be met by internal resources inclusive of Rs 1200 crores of borrowings by the Indian Railway Finance Corporation.

On the financial side, the substantial improvement, which did not justify the order of tariff increases proposed, is reflected in the surplus of receipts over expenditure rising to Rs 435 crores from the budgeted Rs 235 crores in 1991-92 This has helped the Railways to show a higher return on capital-at-charge (percentage of net revenue to capital) at 8.3 per cent as against the budgeted 7 2 per cent and the 6.9 per cent in 1990-91.

With a surplus of Rs 563 crores budgeted for 1992-93, the percentage would further improve to 10.9 per cent while the operating ratio (working expenses in relation to gross earnings) will be only 87 7 per cent as against 92 per cent The Railways will be making larger provisions for the Depreciation Reserve Fund (Rs 2300 crores) and in dividend payment to General Revenues (Rs 1150 crores) More importantly, the Railways expect to liquidate the indebtedness to general revenues, which was of the order of Rs 683.90 crores at the end of March 1992 Sharief, therefore, claims that the Railways have made their contribution towards reduction of fiscal deficit of the government.

The Railways are yet to finalise the Eighth Plan scheduled to start from April 1, 1992 though the objective is to achieve an increase of 83 million tonnes incremental originating revenue-earning traffic over the 335 million tonnes targeted and realised in 1991-92 A shift in priorities is, however, emerging in regard to investments with emphasis on gauge conversion, to convert at least 6000 kms from metre to broad gauge so as to minimise

(Continued on page 33)

Political Economy in Today's India

CHANDRA SHEKHAR

The following statement was released by the former Prime Minister on February 23, 1991. The document has 11 appendices which are not being printed here for lack of space. —Editor

Nationally accepted policies are being drastically changed in quick succession today. The very foundations of the philosophy evolved during the national struggle for India's independence have come under serious questioning by the ruling circle. There have been isolated expressions of unhappiness, by the Opposition parties as also within the ruling party, but there has been no organised, informed and studied protest against the recent policy changes which have serious and long-term consequences.

Taking advantage of the political uncertainty at home and with the support of international vested interests, the rulers have unleashed these measures without caring for long-term implications. For the first time in the history of independent India, the outside powers have systematically attempted to reduce India as a puppet state in the hands of foreign multilateral institutions and the most industrialised and powerful nations. Poverty for the Indian people is not new; but we had national pride. Now even national pride has been compromised, if not wholly mortgaged. People are dazed and the seriousness of the proposed changes has not been fully grasped, even by the Opposition political parties.

Bureaucratic Clique deciding for the Nation

It is equally unfortunate that in government services, again for the first time, a division has been sought to be introduced between the World Bank loyalists and those who still dare to struggle for India evolving its own policies. Adherence to national pride and self-reliance is at a discount. It is rewarding to defend the multinationals, and to preach free trade and philosophy of *laissez-faire*.

The emergence of a clique in the government system which takes pride in talking and behaving in a manner which belittles and ridicules the traditions evolved during the freedom struggle is shocking. They openly want to give India a break from planning and the philosophy of socialism which in their opinion is the cause of the crushing poverty of the country. One even gets an impression that the leadership is also behaving like a 'prisoner'. How else could one explain that the top leadership shows little concern of the initial consequence which is indicated by phenomenal price rise?

These new policies were announced without any discussion and debate at various levels. Ministers announced drastic policy revisions one after the other. What was evolved after years of discussion, experimentation and experience was altered on the advice or direction of those who are hardly conversant with the realities of our social and economic life and certainly do not identify with the poor of this country.

Discussions at different political and academic fora permit wider understanding and help in crystallising opinions for policy-making. While final decisions at democratic fora are adopted on the strength of numbers, such discussions influence the formulation of majority opinion in the legislature which is bound to remain sensitive to public sentiments and the interest of the people. To introduce major policy changes without going through these established democratic and political norms is a dangerous trend. It creates conditions for the emergence of dictatorial tendencies and cannot remain insulated from the extraneous forces that are determined to blackmail and undermine the decision-making powers.

The manner in which decisions are being taken to open up the Indian economy has left many Indian businessmen in a quandary. Industrialists, big or small, have seldom fought against governments or political parties in power. They choose to remain on the right side of the administration and the establishment. They do not take risks. The same is true of senior civil servants and business executives of public enterprises. In private discussions, a large many conscious, nationalist and professional people express their total disgust with the so-called 'liberalisation package'. How can an Indian entrepreneur accept that India needs imported technology, foreign machines and management to produce breakfast foods, soft drinks, underwears, shirts and *dhotis*, chocolates, potato chips, *papads*, ayurvedic medicines, shoes, face creams, bathroom tiles, 'Superman' and 'Batman' comics and 'Barbie' dolls? The collaborations approved during the eighties for such elite consumption, non-essential, foreign-exchange draining and repetitive collaborations present a sad picture. The new dispensation doesn't even consider the phenomenon worth noting. It is an insult to Indian technical manpower, Indian entrepreneurship in big, medium and small scale sectors. Much worse, however, is the utter disregard for national interest, additional foreign exchange cost and the acceleration of unemployment through these steps.

Media Manipulated

The media has been successfully manipulated by a few top economic policy-makers to project only the government's views and systematically kill the voice of dissent. The way TV news and discussions were conducted during the last few months indicate how the entire mass media was well orchestrated.

In India we had felt proud that academics were encouraged to express themselves freely. Independent public institutions and places of higher learning and research cannot be pushed to become dependent on private funds. These have to be supported through public funds as they help in evolving and analysing public policies. This cannot be left in the hands of private vested interests. It is unfortunate that even academics have been issued veiled threats. Those who express independent opinion are deprived of financial support. It is a matter of utmost concern and any such attempt should be resisted not only by academics but also by all those who have faith in free and fearless discussion on public issues.

In its bid to woo foreign investment the government announced at an international forum that all the Opposition parties have been taken into confidence on the new economic policies, and they supported it. One is shocked when such false claims are made by the topmost political leaders and government functionaries. Why such shortsighted, patently untrue statements are made by persons in charge of the nation's future? Is it not a fact that the major Opposition political parties are against the main thrust of the recently announced policies?

New Economic Policy hits at the Roots of Equity

The most disturbing thing about the New Economic Policy is that it is surreptitiously undermining the Social Contract as embodied in the Constitution. The running theme of Social Equity constitutes the distinguishing and prized characteristic of the Constitution. The Preamble, the Directive Principles, the Fundamental Rights, other special provisions in social and economic spheres and the whole edifice of specific legislative instruments subsequently fashioned—all these have articulated and translated the three basic aspects of this theme:

- the inter-personal equity
- the inter-regional equity
- the inter-social group equity.

A series of safeguards have been developed and built-in to protect and further these concepts. What the New Economic Policy seeks to do is to dilute and even eliminate such safeguards systematically and one by one, in the name of "liberalisation". Witness the whole process of virtual abolition of the MRTP Act which was intended to further the objective of reducing the prevailing concentration of economic power. The emphasis of the New Economic Policy on the "incentives" to be provided to creators of wealth has obvious adverse implications for inter-personal equity. The virtual suspension of the planning process and industrial licensing severely constrains the possibility of bringing about regional equity. The polity is already strained by the tension among different groups because of real or perceived unjust inter-se distribution of power among different social groups. The unthinking pursuit of the New Economic Policy will only aggravate these tensions, thus endangering the very fabric of the Indian polity.

Like "liberalisation", the two other euphemisms which are being bandied about are: "globalisation" and "integration with the world system". In this context, we should not forget the recent events in other parts of the world. The examples of Yugoslavia and the USSR are clear enough on one point. The urge for globalisation and integration was most pressing in the relatively better off parts of those states. The precondition for such "integration with the world system" has in effect proved to be "disintegration" of the erstwhile polity. We can ignore these realities only at our peril. Let us not forget that the Indian polity as we have witnessed in recent decades is rather young. It needs to be nurtured and developed with care and compassion. The gains of global integration are bound to be confined to a few, the relatively better-off social groups and the regions of this polity. The vast hinterland and the large majority will only bear the burden of adjustment. Let us not lightly dismiss the explosive implications of the process.

Eighties, the Beginning of the Crisis

It is no secret that the entire package of liberalisation was evolved and promoted by the World Bank and the IMF. It was not evolved by Indian academics, civil servants or political ideologues. Adoption of the package of policies was insisted upon if India desired to have financial support from multilateral agencies. This package could not have been accepted in the seventies. This was accompanied by a profligacy in spending in the past as if "money did not matter". It is the result of that profligacy over the past few years, more so over the period of seven years, that we came to such a critical pass. In the eighties, thanks to reckless and irresponsible economic policies, the country squandered its foreign exchange reserves, borrowed heavily—internally and externally. In fact, foreign currency loans were used to support current revenue expenditure. The country was brought to bankruptcy and there was a real threat to India becoming a defaulter. All this is a well-known history of the recent past.

The tragedy of Indian political life is that we hesitate to fix responsibilities upon those who brought India to the brink of bankruptcy. It is good to avoid witch-hunting; but we must identify the guilty. And an objective inquiry into the factors that caused the serious balance of payments crisis is imperative. For instance, trade deficits and external debt went hand in hand during the eighties. We, however, had been chasing the mirage of manufactured exports with the help of foreign technology. While the scale of technology imports rose rapidly, employment in the organised private manufacturing actually shrunk. It is high time that a group of independent experts is asked to document and analyse the period of the eighties to draw lessons for the future.

Free Market for Whom?

The so-called liberalisation/restructuring package aims to place more reliance on the 'market'. The stated aim is to introduce competition in the Indian economic system. While the plea for competition sounds attractive let us not forget that it is a forerunner of monopoly. Establishment of monopolies is a natural and logical consequence of competition over time. Free competition has always led to concentration of economic power in a few hands. Greater the concentration in private hands, the more it would work against public interest. It is because of this realisation that even a country like the United States of America has the most powerful anti-trust laws. In India, however, the present government seeks to liquidate even whatever anti-monopoly legislations the country had. The present policy would ultimately lead to the MNCs occupying strategic position in the economy.

Salvation in Foreign Investment

It is being claimed that the new policy would end FERA. What for? Why? To benefit whom? These questions being inconvenient, are not permitted to be raised at public fora, not to speak of political discussion beyond the small clique of 'all knowing' men. The policy-makers on their part are falling to the concerted propaganda and are behaving as if India's salvation lies in attracting the MNCs. Policies are being formulated and expectations built without any reference to the contribution of foreign capital to the Indian economy so far. For instance, promoting India's exports and earning net foreign exchange has never been on the MNCs' agenda. They would do so only if there is no alternative. Leaving them free would have disastrous consequences for the economy.

The government's surrender to the MNC lobbies is further evident in its allowing foreign brand names. This would be a severe blow to the interests of the Indian entrepreneurs and would ensure perpetual MNC control on Indian markets. Let the policy-pushers answer two simple question: *one*, what was the role of foreign investment in the development of Japan and South Korea; and *two*, what is the share of foreign branded good in their exports?

Ironically the champions of free trade prefer to ignore the fact that a substantial part of the international trade amounts to inter-branch transactions within the MNC organisations. With increasing strategic alliances among major MNCs such transactions are bound to increase further in future.

Freeing the Import Trade

In line with the philosophy of abdicating its role in formulating and administering public policy, the government has virtually abolished the import licensing policy in the name of liberalisation. It is forgotten that the licensing instrument has protected the domestic industry from dumping of cheap and obsolete technology. The small scale industry, public sector and even the private sector is alive today only because it has been protected from unfair import competition. These very sectors are threatened by the changes over the last one year.

The removal of actual user condition on OGL imports and the large scale use of Exim Scrips for imports by actual users has put the indigenous sector at a disadvantage vis-a-vis foreign goods. It is believed that the new import policy due on April 1 this year may even open the imports of consumer goods.

Experience shows that import licensing is the only effective way to control imports. The tariff mechanism is not very effective since under-valuation defeats the control. Reforms may be needed. But they should be carried out with national interests necessarily subordinating to foreign interests.

Public versus Private Sector

It is being made out that the debate on public sector has been decisively decided in favour of the private sector. Indications are that but for the resistance of the trade unions and the brakes applied by the foreign lending institutions, the government would have gone ahead faster with its privatisation moves. There should not be any defence for inefficiency or deliberate mismanagement irrespective of whether it was in the public sector or in the private sector. This is possible only if the state retains direct control over the operations of both the sectors. On the contrary, during the eighties the possibility of public policy influencing private sector operations was gradually weakened with the surrender of the monetary policy mechanism.

The arguments in favour of privatisation or increasing reliance on the private sector do not hold good if one also takes an objective look at the performance of large Indian private companies.

Warning Signals

There is a certain kind of reforms which the system can accept, absorb and use for its own betterment. Going beyond those limits may start jarring the system itself. Do we want to give up the vision of a society which is based on democracy, independence and social equity? Globalisation of the system beyond a certain point, one is afraid, may lead to such changes in the price structure and in the institutions and in the corporate industrial structure and the industrial base, where growth may be attained at some distant point of time in future but social equity will be given up forever.

A poor society has to keep on supplying wage goods at a price affordable to the poor sections of the population and jobs to the poor workers. If wage goods are made costly only a fewer and more skilled and high income earning workers may afford them, and its natural consequence will be large scale unemployment and poverty. Already there are clear indications in this direction. One should not ignore the resultant social strain and the capacity of the system to absorb it. Undue haste inspired by alien economic interests may prove disastrous for the stability of the social and political structure.

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Essence of Our Swadeshi Movement

GOVINDACHARYA

The BJP's swadeshi jagaran abhiyan *has evoked a wide variety of reaction. That is why we are publishing the following article by the General Secretary of the BJP and inviting the readers to a discussion on this important subject. A slightly abridged version of this article appeared in* The Sunday Times of India.

—Editor

We were a prosperous nation, our society was stable. From time to time we used to make necessary changes in the mechanisms and instruments for the smooth functioning of the society. We were stable, not static, We had our own modes, mechanisms, checks and balances too for steering the society towards progress.

Even 3000 years ago we had foreign trade. Our ships crossed the oceans. It was not just in the field of yoga or spiritualism that we excelled. We experimented with several types of governing systems in this country when Plato was still writing about governance. Decentralised, self-regulated systems were the modes in the social, political and economic aspects of life too. Our astronomers were the first to learn that it is the earth which revolves around the sun and not vice versa. The achievements of Hindu mathematics, decimal system, chemistry have now been acknowledged by all. In the field of art, dance, music, sculpture and literature we have contributed to the global heritage.

Recent studies have shown that in Chengulpet district where the soil is average and irrigation facilities normal, per hectare yield of paddy equalled the achievements of the Green Revolution era in the northern belts of our country. They neither used big dams for irrigation nor chemical fertilisers and pesticides. Even two centuries back the calorie intake of our poorest of the poor, the landless labourer, was higher than that of a British farmer.

Dharam Pal's works give enough information about the state of education, science and technology in India in the eighteenth century. Firstly, because of affluence we were a bit casual in keeping track of the goings-on in other parts of the world. Our prosperity caught the eye of foreign invaders. They could not hurt or damage much.

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THE rise of the East India Company was most ruinous for our country. It started functioning in India from 1615. In 150 years they could carve out an empire. This period coincided with the period of the Industrial Revolution, the Renaissance and the French Revolution. Large scale production was their need. Resources were in abundance. They needed to speed up. And thus came the needed technology of those times, which had a certain type of colonial background. The state patronage, missionary activities also helped them in enslaving the minds of the people, particularly the literates and a section of the political leaders. The British exploited. Our society bled.

Alien thought processes, superstructures, technology, methodology, mechanisms, checks and balances, and value systems were thrust upon us. The situation was like a square peg in a round hole.

When we started rebuilding our economy after attaining independence, our foreign exchange was on the plus side.

We went in for planning our economy. In that we did not assess properly our specialities, our resource potential, our work force. We were enamoured by the glitter and glamour of the West and also by the efforts of the Stalinist state apparatus of the USSR.

So the efforts were on to delink ourselves from our assets and tie ourselves with the processes of those countries. They had special advantages of colonial rule. We had none. But we did not attach much importance to this factor. We neglected the decentralised mode of production. We went with a begging bowl for capital. Rate of growth and percolation theory became the guidelines. We were harbouring a myth that industrialisation meant development. And industries would generate employment, would remove poverty, would raise the standard of living of the masses and would put us on the world map in the position of the leading nation of the East.

But it was not taken into account that situations were drastically different and in a way unique in India's case. For us capital formation was the problem: Our people had the habit of saving more than the West. Working hands were abundant. Agriculture was the base. India represented one-seventh of humanity, but had only four per cent of the world's resources whereas the USA had four per cent of population and 40 per cent of the world's resources. After strenuous effort of nearly four decades the food-grains production reached around 177 million tonnes in 1990-91 compared to 50 million tonnes in 1950-51. The GDP has crossed Rs 200,000 crores today from Rs 42,871 crores in 1951. The per

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An Alternative Economic Programme

Towards Inward-looking, People-centred Development

KAMAL NAYAN KABRA

The characterisation of the crisis of the Indian economy as one of insolvency looming on the horizon is straightaway linked to a sort of predetermined response advocated with high-voltage publicity for resorting to the IMF loan with all the infamous conditionalities. The confidence in India's ability to honour her international commitments reached its nadir and "India was left at the mercy of the foreign creditors and donors". (Jalan, B., 1991; p. 216) For avoiding defaults, financing imports and a number of public projects and programmes, it is considered essential to regain the capacity to borrow internationally as "access to international commercial banks was closed". (Statement of the Finance Minister, *The Times of India*, December 17, 1991; p.6) For this urpose, huge borrowings from the various windows of the IMF and the World Bank are presented as the only option open to India "for restoring confidence and dispelling fears of default". (*Ibid)*

This is an option the acceptance of which implies that shortsighted, market-friendly approaches to 'planning' and policies for continuing on the same path as we have followed so far can be continued and the unwanted baggage of ineffective, cosmetic policy measures can be discarded. It is these measures which are made the scapegoats for all the failures and distortions experienced so far. It is widely admitted that these measures remained, by and large, inoperative or ineffective. However, it is not even asked what was the real nature of the model that operated. Obviously it was the market forces which gnawed at the stated statist model of pursuing equity through growth. Thus the failures of this model are, in effect, the failures of the market model as well. This grim reality is not even reflected upon by the votaries of wholesale marketisation and privatisation.

Avoiding Default: Recipe for Status Quo

It is maintained that India must live up to her unblemished record of honouring international commitments in order to avoid, what is called, the 'national shame' of being branded a defaulting nation. The entire economic crisis syndrome seems to be built around this concern verging on obsession. It seems the authorities do not consider any price too high for averting the 'catastrophe' of default. Thus efforts are on to contract large-scale loans (reportedly amounting to US$ 7 to 8 billion) from various windows of the IMF and the World Bank. A wholesale exercise of rewriting almost every aspect of macro-economic, fiscal, monetary, trade, industrial and other sectoral policies has been undertaken with a view to establish credentials with these multilateral agencies. Even on the political and diplomatic fronts, postures acceptable to the West are being adopted. The concerns arising from foreign trade and payments situation have been permitted to extend to every sphere of the economy in the name of bringing about the so-called structural adjustment, macro-economic balance and long-term policy reforms.

The author, a noted economist, is a Professor at the Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi. This article is based on a chapter of his book, entitled Economic Crisis in India: An Alternative Perspective, *which is coming out shortly.*

This concern and orientation seems to arise from the realisation that we have to continue during the foreseeable future with the policy of meeting our investment-savings gap, trade deficit and current account deficit by means of a mix of commercial and concessional borrowing from abroad. It also implies that we are not visualising any important changes in the relative priorities currently accorded to various socio-economic objectives. This means the government intends to continue its almost single-minded pursuit of the primary objective of economic growth through capital accumulation, technological upgradation, international competitiveness and greater cost-consciousness. Other objectives are sought to be achieved as secondary consequences of the growth-process. For continuing with the pursuit of 'more of the same' continued use of borrowed funds is essential. An adjustment of policy instrument to this end is what the 'policy reform' and 'structural adjustment' seem to be concerned with, resulting in tightening of the belt for the masses.

Thus the 'new' policy design seeks to change only the *mix of instruments* and not the objectives and their *inter se* priority. For this change of instruments with greater 'openness', marketisation and external orientation, supported in the name of a very vague concept called 'globalisation' (does it mean that the Indian economy has to be integrated with a handful of developed countries having one-fifth of the world population but controlling 85 per cent of the world's income?), the imperative of even larger capital inflow from the rest of the world, particularly the early industrialised Western countries, the multilateral agencies, and the MNCs, acquires added urgency. If this perspective on objectives, their content, prioritisation and temporal sequence is accepted, enlarged inflows of foreign capital in various forms are an unavoidable necessity. This necessity underlines the need for maintaining our creditworthiness, which requires further large-scale borrowing with all the attendant terms and conditions.

Even with this perspective, it would have been prudent not to shout from the housetops that we have no option but to take recourse to the IMF-World Bank borrowing and not to give in to speculators in the foreign exchange markets, or to adopt such blatantly panicky measures as phsyical transfer and sale of monetary gold. Careful economic diplomacy does help protect the national interest. But with out-Harroding Harrods keen on huge external loans (a roundabout pursuit of the much-derided soft-option as far as the better-off sections are concerned and a dubious method of avoiding default by repaying with freshly borrowed amounts from the same old set of lenders) and its use as a pretext for forcing a new set of policy instruments and sharpened market-friendly approach on the country, abundant caution in such delicate matters easily becomes a casualty.

Need for a Different Set of Objectives

Thus it must be recognised that any quest for an alternative policy-frame is possible only when a different goal-structure, with a different order of priorities and values, taking the growth of output as a means rather than an ultimate desideratum and self-justifying end, and going in for direct and primary pursuit of social equity and self-reliance, is adopted. However, even with the growth of the GDP as the basic objective, it is possible to downgrade the role of external finance and borrowing and give greater role to domestic liberalisation and domestic resource mobilisation.

But this latter option is not qualitatively different from the one the authorities seem to have adopted. We do not want to go into this variant with greater role to domestic capital, both public and private, more sincere attempts to promote relative price stability, lower capital-intensity and more employment opportunities. These can be achieved to a limited extent within the confines of the prevalent policy regime with some modifications towards greater role for medium and small, dispersed and decentralised industrial enterprises and concomitant changes in the policy of providing infrastructural facilities, and fiscal, monetary and trade polices, de-bureaucratisation and de-politicking with the economic administration. This would amount to a recharging and cleaning up of the so-called Nehru model.

It is possible to regard a switch to this kind of non-monopoly, relatively widely-based model with reduced but nonetheless important role for the external sector as a transitional stage for a really genuine people-centred development. The latter would need both a greatly modified market and public sector and decentralised, participative planning and a qualitatively different interaction with the rest of the world. The people-centred development would not involve autarky: it would involve *selective, planned linking with the rest of the world,* particularly with the South and not just, or primarily, with the North. Not only trade flows in goods and services but also with respect to financial flows—but with increasing degree of genuine reciprocity—would be needed.

A strong inward-orientation, based on sizeable expansion of the home market in which strong symbiotic spread effects galvanise each sector, is essential to provide the basis for selective, mutually-beneficial linking based on non-hegemonic reciprocity in international economic relations. This would involve a total rejection of the Dunkel Draft proposals for the GATT negotiations which have surprisingly been endorsed by the apex organisations of India's trade and industry!

The Context

Let us try to outline the context of the alternative we intend to project. It is not based on any emotional or other kind of attachment to the existing policy regime which is a highly distorted version of the intentions expressed in many of our Plan documents. We do not uphold or support the inherited policy regime, particularly its excessive centralisation, bureaucratic and political discretionary approach leading to massive and systemic corruption, its ideological commitment to the primacy of growth, fond hopes regarding the relative autonomy and meutrality of the state, regressive pattern of financing, its top-down character, neglect of the actual micro behaviour pattern of trade and industry, neglect of the motivation and behaviour of the external economic agents (private, governmental and multilateral), reflecting unilaterally their narrow interests, despite the posture of enlightened self-interest as partners in progress, etc. Thus non-acceptance of the policy perspective unfolded by the present government should not be taken to imply any endorsement of the *status quo* in which lies the genesis of the present crisis.

On the contrary, the alternative expounded is based on a different vision of society. That vision is not timid and myopic, submitting to the presently entrenched forces because they rule the roost and getting overawed by the prospects of a long struggle needed for its fructification. It is based on the perception that people themselves have to be the agents for changing their destiny, making use of all the institutions and possibilities available. After all, the state and the market both are incomplete organisations for development and their complementary role is necessary to involve and energise many other institutions. What we are presenting is no complete, *a priori* determined alternative. It is only an outline of some alternative policy proposals which can be combined together in many different ways and can certainly involve proposals we have not been able to think of and modifications and improvements of those discussed here below.

Short-Run Adjustments

No alternative can be implemented without a short-term immediate programme which can rid the economy of a number of distortions, at least partially. A number of such short-run steps are common between various alternative policy-paths including the one which is being implemented by the government. However, the content of such measures of macro-economic adjustment can be quite different. Some important elements of this short-term package are:

(1) Drastic cut in the current wasteful public expenditure. This cut should not cover long-run, productive capital and current expenditure like on power, transport, other infrastructure, social consumption for the weaker sections (though wasteful methods of construction and delivery must be changed and closer-targetting introduced in social spending). Cut in the Central public expenditure should involve establishment costs reducing huge expenses on administration which is full of pomp, show and extravaganza inconsistent with the country's needs, capacity and ethos. These administrative expenses should be gradually brought down to extremely austere levels. An agency with adequate power should apply the axe with a mandate to effect at least a 25 per cent cut in Central spending without reducing long-term capital formation. Similar exercises have to be undertaken at the level of the State Governments and Central and State public enterprises.

(2) Similar austerity has to be enforced on the corporate sector by sutiable changes in corporate taxation and company law. Not only does this sector account for a large part of wasteful consumption which leads to the soaring of industrial costs, but it results in unaccounted private gains at public expense and set up a snowballing process of consumerism and cost-push inflation.

(3) Compression of imports, particularly of the inputs going into luxury goods, as also initiation of steps to reduce malpractices which increase foreign exchange outgo and leakages.

(4) Following from the previous point, there should be a reduction in the production of goods with heavy import content, like Maruti cars, white goods, etc. for a period of two years. These goods should largely be sold in foreign markets during this period. Limited domestic sale should attract heavy customs and import duties while their exports should receive incentives. It is ridiculous that Rs 800 crores should be advanced as credits at 12.5 per cent interest for buying frivolities like personal passanger cars or that new Boeing aircrafts should be purchased for Rs 2000 crores—a sum more than the total consumer subsidy (as distinct from food subsidy) on cereals under the PDS. Defence spending should come under tight scrutiny.

(5) Fresh external borrowing should be based on strict calculation that each loan is self-liquidating, that is, creates capacity to earn or save foreign exchange needed for interest payment and amortisation. No external borrowing to finance rupee projects or rupee component of projects/programmes should be undertaken. A small loan from the IMF under simpler set of terms may be availed of. Mobilisation of NRI resources, gold holdings and plugging of avenues of illegal flow of funds with a view to reduce external indebtedness should be attempted.

(6) Simplification of direct tax laws, by removing all kinds of veiled concessions and deductions so that the formal and effective rates of taxes tend to become similar. Strict enforcement of these laws, imposing criminal liability for wilful breach, is also called for. The contribution of direct taxes must be increased and external borrowing and deficit financing curbed to modest levels consistent with price stability.

Such a package should be pursued vigorously in order ot correct the fiscal imbalances and external insolvency crisis. Restructuring of public enterprises and their financial management, their pruning by making the state move out of terminally sick units in low priority areas (which means subsidy to the better-off sections using the products of such enterprises), greater autonomy to professional management for servicing the objectives for which the PEs have been set up, particularly by eschewing unaccountable meddling in their affairs by politicians and bureaucrats, are among the steps which brook no delay.

This is not an exhaustive list. But the basic point of such exercises is to correct the wrong practices and distortions which have piled up during the last four decades. These steps can provide a basis for effective socio-economic planning for development which is responsive to our basic long-term problems.

Why is our Home Market Narow and Small?

One basic factor responsible for the present crisis, whose intensity has increased during the 1980s but has been present all along, has been the narrowness of the Indian home market.

The limited size of the Indian doemstic market is a direct reflection of widespred absolute poverty. It is true that, thanks to sustained increase in the GDP, the overall size of the Indian market is much larger today than it was on the morrow of independence. But in terms of the average purchasing power per person (reflected in the per capita private final consumption expenditure), the home market is considerably small. In 1988-89, the per capita private final consumption expenditure was Rs 3250 only at current prices thus giving a daily purchasing power of barely Rs 8.90 (at current prices) to an average Indian. In 1980-81, the comparable figure was about Rs 4. It is apparent that, even after accounting for distributional skewedness, there is little purchasing power to sustain sizeable industrial growth, particularly because industrial growth itself generated limited spread effects owing to its capital and import-intensity, concentrated ownership and control, and generation of a large unaccounted economy.

Relative poverty also contributes to a small home makret, particularly for simple, low-priced goods. Such goods can be produced by our relatively abundant local physical and human resources with small increases in investment in each case and marginal improvements in traditional technologies. The limitation of the size of effective demand follows from the highly skewed distribution of productive assests, skills, socio-economic power and access to public goods. The resulting distribution of income concentrated in the hands of the high income groups creates a pattern of demand requiring highly capital-intensive, import-dependent and energy-intensive commodities. The persistence of cultural colonialism and the assoiated valub system also contribute to a pattern of demand which is neither rooted in our culture nor based on local needs and indigenous resources.

It has been suggested time and again, and with some amount of cynicism, that even with acute absolute and relative poverty, India has a vast market consisting of the middle and upper income groups. This market consists of, say, the top 10 per cent of the Indian population. This number is considered in absolute and comparative terms large enough to sustain modern industrialisation, particularly since it controls a large chunk of national income and wealth. It is indeed true that the bulk of industrial growth of India is based on the purchasing power concentrated in the hands of this minority. This factor is a part of the problem and cannot form part of the solution. Large numbers of landless agricultural workers and the ineffectively employed people are able to buy little of the products of our industry. It has been seen that whenever we have been fortunate enough to reap a succession of two or three good harvests, the unplanned inventories of procured wheat and rice have accumulated to costly and embarassingly high levels. This derives in part from a certain degree of inelasticity in the lifting of cereals from the public distribution system. Our abysmally low average income and expenditure levels, with observed skewedness, too indicate that goods of industrial origin can hardly enter the consumption basket of large sections of society to a reckonable extent.

As a result our industrial growth acquires an enclave character and becomes the basis for social dualism. Vast numbers of the working poor who flock to urban areas as a result of a combination of push and pull factors fail to find employment in these enclave industries. They can become neither industrial workers nor consumers of industrial goods, except marginally through the mechanism of the urban informal sector.

The question is: how far can such enclave industrialisation with its involutionary processes go on without hitting the limits of the market? A detailed and thorough answer would require a lot of disaggregated analysis of the consumption data, demand pattern and marketing problems faced by different industries for products in different price ranges.

However, some qualitative, historical facts are quite indicative. Modern industrialisation has a history of over a hundred and forty years in India, of which the last four post-independence decades were in the framework of public investment based national planning. Despite impressive growth, diversification, completion of the production cycle in many areas, a vigorous entrepreneurial class, development of infrastructure and financial services, plentiful availability of raw materials, excess supply of skilled labour and technical-managerial personnel, organised industry remains an enclave with less than eight million employees, who alongwith other non-organised segments of industry, contribute a little over a quarter of the GDP. About 45 per cent of the secondary sector's main workers are employed in rural industries, about a half of them in household industries. Even in urban industries, over 15 per cent work in the household sector. It is clear that modern industries remain a restricted phenomenon.

It is this inability of industry to reach a commanding position which has made the service sector the leading sector of the economy. It can also be seen that agriculture has come to demand a number of inputs like fertilisers, pesticides, gunny bags, implements, electric machinery, etc. But despite all these factors, industry impacts the lives of only a minority of Indians and has not been able to enlarge its compass.

Then, many of our industries producing modern gadgets or their inputs, are not able to reap the economies of scale. Part of the reason may probably be the licensing policies. But whenever market forces make it profitable, Indian business has been able to bypass or defeat the licensing policies. Thus a major factor preventing the industry from realising the economies of scale may well be the limited size of the domestic market. The slump that entertainment electronics, automobiles (which is now facing a buyer's market after a long period of sellers' market), are facing is perhaps an indicator of the market limits which these industries have encountered so soon.

Thus one can see that use of the processes of market-deepening as the foundation for sustained industrial growth has a definite impact on limiting the rate and distorting the pattern of industrialisation and limiting its spread effects. *It cannot industrialise the entire economy, involve the bulk of the population and make for an integrated, homogenised and humanised society.* It spawns dualism, increases social and economic distances and disparities. The costs of these disparities in the form of social tensions, threat to nation-state, social harmony and orderly society are too heavy to be ignored. Thus the naive belief that one can ignore the majority of Indians and industrialise India seems to rest on a misreading of history, current experience and processes of economic change. The less one says about the values behind this mimetic view of industrial growth the better.

Limited efforts towards redistributive policies like land reforms, formally progressive taxtion, provision of basic needs, etc., could not make any tangible impact on the distribution of income or creation of a vibrant home market which embodies the needs and wants of the general masses clothed with effective purchasing power. It is true that during the 1970s anti-absolute poverty programmes were initiated in order to activise through direct public outlays the 'pull-up' effects to make up for the non-realised 'trickle-down' effects. However, the essential nature of these programmes was to provide a modicum of purchasing power which was thinly spread over a large number of people and areas by means of, at best, semi-productive programmes. These highly visible programmes were incapable of creating through their own productive contribution the wherewithal for the sustenance and enlargement of these programmes with a view to cover the entire mass of the indigent people over a foreseeable future and give them a human status and standard of living.

This weakness was further accentuated by large-scale leakages owing to the defects of the delivery system. This created a number of bureaucratic and political intermediaries at the grassroot level who thrived on the leakages from these poverty-alleviation programmes. This group of political and bureaucratic operators associated with the anti-poverty programme provide the political underlings and muscle power for mobilising political support for the ruling formations. The shortcomings of these programmes also intensify because these are neither integrated within a macro-economic framework nor do they form parts of integrated micro-level plans.

However, the absolute financial outlays on these schemes appear huge and attractive and become handy tools for mobilising popular support in our competitive pluralistic polity. It is also true that these programmes do, to some extent, increase the purchasing power in the rural areas and, to some extent, even in the hands of the relatively poor. However, the methods of financing the rising public outlays during this period tended to be inflationary and imposed a cut on the living standards of the poor masses. The resulting financial stringency slowed down the growth of social consumption directed towards the poor. The semi-productive nature and leakages from these programmes also contributed to the inflationary pressures.

Hence, the net positive impact could have been lower than indicated by the size of financial outlays or person days or work reportedly created.

The net result of such programmes was to create a dependency syndrome among the poor people. They tended to make the state paternalistic. They were used to build the 'image' of political personalities. Such programmes tend to give the impression of concern for the interests of the poor. However, they are incapable of bringing about among the poor an independent capacity to overcome poverty and backwardness. They are also incapable of ensuring collective mass empowerment which is the precondition for genuine development. Such programmes cannot improve the share of the poorer sections in the distribution of productive assets or meet their essential basic minimum needs, or improve their access to public goods or expand the home market in order to provide the foundations for indigenous, sustained, inward-looking development.

However, these programmes are great political assets in the sense the high absolute amounts spent on them can be flaunted as testimonials of the government's commitment to the poor. The relative size of these programmes is not large enough to overshadow the basic well-springs of the demand for industrial goods originating from the market-determined primary distribution of income and wealth. Thus the industrial growth has to remain riveted to a small segment of Indian society where through the open market and the black economy operations significant market-deepening is taking place. This is also sought to be supplemented by an outward-looking pursuit of export markets. Thus these token anti-poverty programmes cannot contribute to the realisation of a society which is in accordance with our democratic and humanitarian values leading to people-centered development based on the use of the potential made possible by the scientific and technological revolution.

Basis for Inward-looking Development: Expanding the Home Market, Social Security for the Poor

Is there a way out? The very factors of heavy concentration of land ownership and control which underline the need for a quick and democratic land reforms programme also underline the political difficulties in successfully accomplishing these programmes of land reforms. The manner in which concentration of assets in the industrial and service sector has increased and provides effective resistance to redistributive measures like taxation (taking the form of 'tax revolt' as manifested in the burgeoning black economy) suggests that the conventional instruments for fostering equity are too slow and modest and teethless to be able to make any worthwhile impact, particularly in the context of the severity of the initial maldistribution found in our midst.

An alternative could perhaps emerge if the limitations of the existing anti-poverty programmes are realised and corrected. If these programmes are to become viable, provide a basis for sustained development, improve the ecological balance, do not become a permanent burden on the exchequer and do not make people dependent on these paternalistic programmes, it is essential that some qualitative changes are introduced in these programmes. In such an eventuality these programmes would not remain fire-fighting operations for containing social tensions, or for reducing the embarassment of mounting unsold stocks of food in the midst of under-employed, semi-starved millions.

These programmes would have to be endowed with positive thrust and made a basis for collective self-empowerment of the poor masses. This can come about if a minimum level of participation in economic activities and sharing in the national cake can be introduced by means of a massive enlargement and qualitative improvement of the employment generation and asset distribution programme commensurate with the size and nature of our problem of ineffective unemployment. Such a programme and policy will have to be based on the premise that a minimum human standard of living and active participation for every ablebodied adult is the first draft on our national resources with the highest priority and without it development efforts cannot make sense. And we have the capacity to do it. In a real and wider sense, this is a productive programme par excellence.

It would mean the introduction of *a nationwide employment guarantee programme* which ensures that every willing and healthy person is given an opportunity to participate in economic activities, activities which are not mere digging-holes-and-filling-them-up-again variety of works but are capable of generating assets, improving skills, providing essential public services like health, education, nutrition, controlled price distribution of essential goods, environmental improvement, prevention of pollution, etc.

It means such a nationwide programme has to become the bedrock of local level planning and public intervention. The scale of such programmes has to be such that every willing adult is provided work on minimum living wages in the vicinity of his/her habitat, say within the daily commutable distance of 15-20 kilometres on various public or semi-public works or works through people's own voluntary organisations. The variety of activities which can be taken up is really staggering: agriculture, land improvement, irrigation, watershed management, soil upgradation, contour-bunding, social forestry, dairy farming, fishery, poultry, elementary education, running of FP shops, production of bio-fertilisers based on agricultural, animal and forest wastes and its marketing, flood prevention, building roads, schools, community centres, public conveniences, tapping of non-conventional renewable sources of energy, training, etc.

Programmes of rural industrialisation based on local resources, upgradation of conventional skills and production for the local and specialised markets can get a real boost through these programmes because the purchasing power injected through these programmes can provide the most essential and presently seriously missing element, that is, the market. If something like Rs 15,000 crores per annum are devoted to these programmes of employment guarantee, at least Rs 10,000 crores worth of demand for industrial goods would be generated. If it is raised to Rs 20,000 crores in order to provide complementary inputs to labour, the market expansion, direct and through multiplier effect, would be so much more. It would create waves of secondary and subsequent employment, capital accumulation, technological improvements and improve the standard of living of the masses in a composite, inter-related manner. Over time such activities and the purchasing power injected through them, the training in skills and micro enterprises and the support provided by improved level of social consumption can lead to a series of subsidiary socio-economic and institutional ripple effects. Thus, in course of time, the people's own initiative and resources can provide an increasing amount of work and income-earning opportunities, reducing the need for state-supported programmes. This programme would provide the most effective condition for the enforcement of minimum wages and gradually change the character of our labour market. A beginnning of the process of real empowerment of the people.

If such activities are confined to standard unskilled and semi-skilled activities with a planned gradual improvement of productivity and the skills through gradually increasing use of tools, equipments, energy and raw-materials, there is little doubt that this programme will provide a sound basis for inward-loooking, democratic, people-centred development. It would not amount to chasing the mirage of modernisation, high-tech and international competitiveness without first providing to the citizens at large an opportunity to overcome their total non-participation, pauperisation and marginalisation. Recent estimates by the Planning Commission have shown that an annual amount in the region of Rs 15,000 crores would be sufficient to make a beginning of the National Employment Guarantee Programme with a provision for unemployment allowance to those who cannot be helped through such programmes. Taking the recent population trends into account and with a view to strengthen the productive content and multiplier affect of this programme, it may be better to assume that something like Rs 20,000 crores may be required for implementing these programmes through various grassroot level organisations under the framework of systematic micro-level planning. This programme would increase the viability of the people and provide them a stable means of livelihood even without having access to land. While the empowerment through the non-landlords' dependent employment may create informal pressures for the implementation of land reforms, the pattern of demand arising from such widely distributed incomes may provide a basis for inward-looking, non-mimetic industrial growth. It would not strain our balance of payments.

With improved non-land based viability, the poor may be better placed to resist the informal pressure of the landlords which prevents the implementation of land reform measures. This generalised social security would also become a basis for the enforcement of the minimum wage laws in the agricultural and non-agricultural rural activities. This programme would create widely distributed effective demand on the basis of which rural and small town household, informal and small industries can thrive without the excessive and perpetual dependence on schemes of subsidies or preferential discrimination. There is little doubt that such a programme will change the complexion of India's development strategy and efforts and would amount to an effective and realistic beginning of people-centred, democratic development.

A programme of this kind is the fundamental basis for putting an end to our elitist orientation at home and the dependency mentality annd unhealthy external orientation. It is also a programme around which a multiplicity of other programmes for health, education, controlled fair price distribution of essential goods for the balanced development of society and its individual members can be initiated. It is the most effective, most desirable and entirely feasible alternative which can be initiated. We have financial, physical, managerial and organisational resources for it. We need to overcome our conventional mindsets and subserve the most basic interests, that is, the interests of the poorest of the poor. ■

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Communism at the Crossroads

MODHUMITA MOJUMDAR

At its recent party congress in Madras, the CPI-M leadership, for the first time since it broke away from the undivided Communist Party of India some 27 years ago, had its wisdom questioned by the rank and file. It was only by promising to keep an open mind on the disturbing trends in the world communist movement, at least for the time being, that the differences could be papered over. Now, a committee will be set up to study and analyse the developments that started with Gorbachev's *perestroika* and *glasnost,* and led to the collapse of the USSR itself.

Though some individual delegates did use the choicest of Marxist rhetoric to call Mikhail Gorbachev names, this was not considered enough of a solution by the rest. For the first time, the wisened old leaders of this Stalinist party admitted that they did not have pat solutions and pat responses to the greatest-ever crisis facing the global future of communism itself, and not just one brand of communism questioning the genuineness of another brand—as happened on all previous occasions that marked the turninig points in communist thought and praxis, starting with Trotsky's Fourth International.

The question, at this point of time, is whether the CPI-M (or, for that matter, the Indian Communists in general whether they belong to the CPI, the CPI-M or any of the M-L groups, not to speak of the miniscule, pro-Congress-I coterie that Dange came to lead in his later years) has developed the tools over the years which would enable it to examine where and how things have gone wrong, whether or not it is communism itself that has soured or merely a particular, aberrant manifestation of it.

The problem with the Indian Communists is that they have time and again sacrificed the national outlook in order to be able to keep their extra-territorial loyalties intact—all in the name of the world communist movement and a global perspective. The British Raj found in the Indian Communists an ally when the Soviet Union joined Britain and her allies in the battle with Germany during the Second World War. For, what was to the rest of India and her nationalist leaders a unique opportunity to dislodge the British from their deadly grip on India, became a "People's War" to them the moment Stalin's Red Army was directed to fight Hitler's hordes. Subhas Bose, once a friend, became an enemy of the people. It was long after the event that the CPI owned its "mistake" in this matter and the Communists of India started paying lip service to the memory of Bose—though whether this was out of any genuine regard for Netaji or in shrewd realisation that, but for this, they will make no political headway in West Bengal, is a matter that is debatable. The green signal for this came from Moscow when, although it did not have any special word of commendation for Bose, it went to the extent of "rehabilitating" Gandhi—something for which not only the Indian Communists, but the Congress Government of India too, was truly grateful.

When Mao's China developed differences with the USSR and provided the second pole to world communism, the Indian Communists were compelled to choose between Moscow and Beijing—leading to the first split in the CPI. Thereafter followed a strange period during which the CPI came increasingly close to the Congress. The CPI-M and the other Left parties also found merit worth supporting in Indira Gandhi when she nationalised the banks and abolished the privy purses of princely titles, but they soon realised that these were Pyrrhic victories notwithstanding the brave, new socialistic rhetoric and the amendment in the Constitution incorporating socialism as one of the cherished goals. With the ultra-Left breaking away from the CPI-M and raising battle cries in the name of Mao, the CPI-M went through a period when it fought both the "Right Communists" and the "Left extremists", although like the CPI, it too found merit in the Government of India's "progressive" foreign policy. Indeed, the CPI was perhaps more consistently Marxian, as it, by and large, also supported the Congress Government's domestic policies—the axiom being that the foreign and domestic policies of any government together formed a whole; and to praise one, while denigrating the other was like saying that the egg was good in parts.

However, it was this ideological "consistency" on the part of the CPI under Dange that brought it to discredit during the notorious Emergency that was clamped down on the country in 1975 by an Indira Gandhi fighting to save her seat with her back to the wall. This was partly due to pressure from the Soviet Union and partly because it fitted in with Dange's own temperament. The post-Emergency period therefore saw the CPI admitting its "mistake" once again in having supported the domestic policy of Indira Gandhi, though it was left only to the M-L groups to be critical of New Delhi's foreign policy in which both the major Communist Parties that counted found much merit. This was simply because India had virtually reduced itself to a satellite of the Soviet Union; a satellite that had its uses, given the enormous goodwill it had in the developing world—particularly in the context of the non-aligned movement. Indeed, it was largely because of New Delhi that the NAM took the most peculiar stance that one of the superpowers—namely, the USSR—was a natural ally of the non-aligned nations! It was presumably this stance that endeared the GOI to the bulk of Indian Communists who considered the 1971 Indo-USSR Friendship Treaty (which was in reality a thinly veiled defence treaty) as yet another feather in their cap.

Neither the CPI nor the CPI-M (nor, for that matter, the M-L groups) had, however, taken much note of the developments in communist thought, analysis and praxis as it had developed among the Communists of the USA and Western Europe in the sixties and seventies. Some of the most scathing criticisms of the USSR were penned in this period by Herbert Marcuse who, far from being a Communist-baiter, was critical of Moscow because of the hiatus between what it preached and what it practised. It was not communist ideology that Marcuse criticised, but the totalitarian, repressive regime with its many aberrations that Moscow and its satellite nations tried to palm off as the genuine stuff. In addition to this, revulsion for the Soviet system of the state manipulating the people's lives and thoughts had at last permeated into the non-ruling Communist Parties of Europe who valued the freedom that parliamentary democracies gave to citizens of every political persuasion, including the Communists, and so no merit in the Soviet (or the Chinese) model. Indeed, in a bid to distance themselves from the kind of regimes that flourished in the Communist Parties of Italy, Spain, France and so on countries under the control of the Communist Parties, had denounced the ideal of "dictatorship of the proletariat" and the very ideology of Marxism-Leninism. Yet, although they themselves derived their freedom to preach their own brand of politics from the freedom of thought and speech guaranteed to them in a parliamentary democracy, the Indian Communists obstinately refused to have their eyes opened by men like Marcuse and Berlinguer.

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IN addition to the terror tactics and domination over the people with the help of secret police, the so-called socialist states had failed their peoples by not being able to provide an acceptable alternative to the dazzling consumer culture of the capitalist countries that beckoned them from across the iron curtains which had been set up around them by their Communist masters. Indeed, Mao had tried to push through a Cultural Revolution in China—but that, too, had ended in a fiasco. In the post-Mao period, China had coveted investment from the capitalist countries, having opened up its economic stops for the purpose—but denied the people the freedom that goes with it. The Tiananmen Square massacre revealed how Man, even in China, does not live by Chou-mien alone. But the Indian Communists had no word of condemnation for this barbaric deed against their people by the Chinese rulers who are notionally their representatives. Their response to what Beijing does today and what Moscow sought to do yesterday, under Gorbachev, clearly reveals that the Indian Communists are not so much opposed to *perestroika* (economic reform) in a Communist-ruled state as *glasnost* (openness). But, above all, their minds are set in a groove from which they can make only programmed responses. It is such mechanical responses that they permit their rank and file.

The committee that the CPI-M seeks to set up to examine issues is, therefore, unlikely to find for communism a new relevance—suited to the new times and new aspirations of the people. And yet, India with its rich and variegated tradition, with tolerance being its hallmark, could have enriched communism in more ways than one, giving it a human face. Perhaps the call for a Fifth International should go out from India. But then, at the Madras congress the CPI-M did not even bother to invite delegates from a majority of the fraternal parties which it considers as untouchables because of their commitment to openness at every level of party functioning and government. Will it be able to provide leadership to the world at the present juncture, when it is disillusioned sufficiently with communism to want to throw away the baby with the bathwater? ■

Niyogi's Murder and Trade Union Movement Today

MUKUL

The murder of Shankar Guha Niyogi, the famous trade union leader of the Chattisgarh region in Madhya Pradesh, has a deep significance for the trade union movement in this country. Niyogi has been murdered at a time when the aggressive reach of the new economic policies under the dictates of the World Bank-IMF are becoming more widespread and anti-worker. With their existing institutional defences under attack, the industrial working people today face the prospect of being sidelined into effectively unregulated industrial estates. Niyogi was murdered when thousands of contract workers in the Bhilai industrial township were engaged in a long struggle under his leadership. Though this ongoing struggle raised basic economic demands, like minimum wages, overtime, PF, permanency, etc. of the unorganised working people, in that process it was, however, also throwing a challenge to the existing industrial policies, the socio-political equilibrium of the ruling class and for the BJP-led State Government.

Niyogi has been murdered when the new economic policies of the Congress-led Central Government are being actively supported by the BJP-led State Government, and that is why the Chattisgarh region of MP is again on the brink of a new phase of heavy industrialist-criminal-bureaucracy conspiracy for which a CBI inquiry needs to be instituted. In the light of it, trade unions must take a closer look at the new economic policy and the challenges to trade union politics in contemporary India.

I

THE economic crisis is not something new in the history of independent India, but this time alongwith it, a general crisis has also developed in various facets of society, a crisis that manifests itself in the constant shrinking of the sphere of secular, progressive ideology vis-a-vis the rise and development of communal, consumerist and Rightist ideology; the break-up of the so-called socialist system, and a sharpening of the inner contradictions in the policies and ideology of the Leftist forces in the country.

The most characteristic feature of today's crisis is the combination of a cyclic economic crisis with dangerous structural and policy adjustments under the overall dominance of the World Bank, the IMF and the developed capitalist countries. And along with it a deep ideological and political crisis. This reflects the ideological bankruptcy of the ruling class today as it believes that the only hope to overcome the present economic crisis lies in the imported colonial designs of the international financial institutions. And the political crisis manifests itself not only in the 'non-governance' of Punjab, Assam, Jammu-Kashmir and the rising terrorist-separatist activities in the country but also in the political instability and the failure of development policies in being able to check the various socio-economic problems of the country.

The various contradictions inherent in the new economic policy package are bound to accelerate the process of government repression, social turmoil and unrest. The free market capitalist economy, with the close interrelationship of international capitalist order, can increase the industrial production and market potential, but this so-called progress cannot halt the process of continuous erosion in the living and working conditions of the majority of the working class people. The World Bank-IMF package may somehow increase the shrinking foreign exchange reserves of the country, but in this very process, both ideologically and economically, national sovereignty is bound to get undermined and fettered. Also, the role of the various democratic institutions in the country, like Parliament, judiciary, trade unions, democratic rights organisations, will be constantly curtailed. An example of this is the fact that the Finance Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, ignores the existing national platforms and announces the new government policies regarding the public sector at the World Bank-IMF meet in Bangkok. Or the Indian Ambassador to the USA defies the Indian Government's policy on the GATT negotiations and Intellectual Property Rights and dares to openly campaign in support of the US standpoint.

This is the background of the murder of Shanker Guha Niyogi. The actual murderers could be some professional criminals hired by industrialists, or it could be a conspiracy of the local administration-police-contractor combine. But had it not been for the offensive of the new economic policies in the country, and a particular State Government led by the BJP which is openly repressive against the workers, peasants, tribals, environmentalists, youth movements, nobody would have dared to conspire and murder a trade union leader in the course of an ongoing and protracted labour movement.

For the last 15 years, Niyogi had been very much active in a militant and fast growing workers' movement in the Chattisgarh region. Various State Governments, whether led by the Janata Dal, the Congress or the BJP, had been equally repressive and hostile to the workers' movements, especially the rising Chattisgarh Mukti Morcha in MP. But in spite of all this, the physical existence of the trade union leader was never threatened in such a manner. The ghastly murder of Niyogi is very painful and shocking for all the democratic forces in the country, not only because he was a very militant and dynamic trade union leader who tried hard to break the traditional boundaries of trade union politics in India today, but also because his murder reveals the cruel reality that our industrial and economic development policies have reached a stage where even the existence of basic trade union politics and its leadership is unacceptable.

In fact the murders of Safdar Hashmi and Niyogi have a common context and continuity, which is important to note: Safdar was primarily a cultural activist but alongwith it, he was also a member of the CPM and Niyogi was an unorthodox trade unionist having a political proximity with the People's War Group and the IPF. But both became the victim of the same cruel forces of politics and economy. When Safdar Hashmi and his Jan Natya Manch were performing a street play in the Sahibabad industrial complex near Delhi, in support of the industrial workers' movement for the lawful revision of minimum wages, he alongwith other members of his group was fatally assaulted by the local Congress-I leaders. This was the period of the new economic policies of the Rajiv Gandhi era which by that time were thoroughly exposed and defeated due to their inherent weaknesses. The bankruptcy and increasing isolation of the ruling class provoked its local workers. Now again under the leadership of P.V. Narasimha Rao and Manmohan Singh the new economic policies are acquiring a new offensive in the country. And in this environment, a man who was leading a long battle of contract labourers for some minimum trade union demands in the Bhilai industrial complex was killed.

The ruling class often expresses identical reactions in defeat and victory. The economic policies of Rajiv Gandhi and P.V. Narasimha Rao here become identical in their content and impact. And in this process, the fate of Safdar and Niyogi becomes the same. This is the situation that has emerged on the socio-economic plane of the country today. And if this new situation cannot be challenged by new priorities and a new unity, then the militancy of a trade union on the one hand and all-India actions of the central union on the other will prove to be futile. Yesterday it was Safdar Hashmi, today it is Shankar Guha Niyogi and tomorrow it will be Thankappan, Shamsul Islam, Suneet Chopra, Brinda Karat or Megha Patkar.

II

THE murder of Niyogi also testifies to the fact that in recent years various conservative, anti-national and repressive forces of the Indian society and economy have got intermingled and have acquired a character of a united all-India body. Thus in terms of economic policies, it makes no difference that the Centre has Congress and Madhya Pradesh has BJP rule. The economic policies of the Central Government receive a rousing welcome by the State Government in this case and in this process these measures reach remote far-off areas of Chattisgarh. The Durg-Bhilai District Industry Centre provides detailed information about the proposed massive industrialisation under the new economic policies with the consent and even participation of the State Government. In the Chattisgarh region, the pre-independence and post-independence period witnessed two different phases of industrialisation. Now the third phase of massive industrialisation has arrived.

Apart from dozens of new small medium ancilliary industries, rolling mills, there is for the first time big sponge, iron, cement, food processing and electronics industries coming up, owned by the big industrial houses of the country. The Prime Minister, the Finance Minister and the Coal Minister of the country express their concern about workers' productivity and trade union movement, and this concern also finds similar expression in the words of the Raipur Commissioner:

> So many industrialists want to come to Chattisgarh. But when there are labour movements, how will they come here? This is the question of the development of Chhattisgarh.

The new economic policy threatens the employment and living of the unorganised-organised sector workers of the country. And Niyogi felt the pulse of this threat during his long struggle in an Opposition-ruled State when he said:

> There were many attacks on us, tomorrow we will have to face other rounds of more dangerous attacks. There can be an incident which can be nerve shattering.
> I know that they are after my life. (Excerpts from Niyogi's public speeches and tape-recorded statement.)

It is also significant to note that the conservative, fascistic and anti-people tendencies of society are complementary to each other. One conservatism feeds on the other, and this is more dangerous in the context of the BJP-led MP State Government where the offensive of the new economic policy is taking a fascistic overtone due to the patronage of an openly communal state.

In Madhya Pradesh, the nature of the communal state identifies and relies upon a 'Hindu identity'. To build this Hindu identity, it explicitly implies the repression of various caste, class, linguistic and regional autonomous movements. Various subaltern groups, organised working classes and their organisations are the central targets of this kind of state repression.

In MP, the *rath yatra* of Advani reached earlier, and now the *vikas yatra* of Manmohan Singh is taking the same path. Both the *yatras* strengthen the same conservative, anti-people forces in the society. There are many examples to support the case of the BJP being a firm supporter of the new economic policies of Manmohan Singh. When the Central Government was only discussing the various options for the privatisation of power and transport sectors, the BJP-led Himachal Pradesh Government actually privatised power, transport and education sectors in the State. And very recently the BJP affiliated central trade union, the Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh, opposed the call of the all-India industrial strike on November 29, 1991, which was against the economic and industrial policies of the government.

The murder of Niyogi has received nationwide attention, but under the BJP Government, the Chattisgarh region has witnessed various assaults on the workers' movement that have gone largely unnoticed. According to police records, over a thousand workers were arrested in one year of the Bhilai labour movement, more than 1300 workers have been terminated from their services, and many-a-time peaceful demonstrations and processions of workers have been attacked by police and anti-social elements. And this is not specific to the Bhilai labour movement alone. Sometime ago, when the unorganised rice mill workers of Avanpur and Rajim in the Raipur district were agitating for their legal and minimum demands, the police fired indiscriminately, in which one worker was killed and many more seriously injured; labour leaders were arrested and threatened with *jila badar*. What do these facts signify?

III

THE industrialisation of Chattisgarh has some striking aspects which are important to observe, more so in the context of present day labour movement.

Chattisgarh can be divided into two broad categories: the Chattisgarh plain and the Chattisgarh plateau. The plain area was once known as the 'rice bowl of India' for its abundant rice crops, while the plateau which surrounds the Chattisgarh plain from three sides was famous for mineral deposits and forests. Chattisgarh being very rich in mineral resources, shaped the industrialisation of this region in the recent period.

During British rule garo-based small industries were set up. Rice mills, dal mills and oil mills were prominent among them. Some forest based industries were also set up in the 1930s. Chattisgarh has the distinction of having a textile mill at Rajnandgaon as early as 1895 and a jute mill at Raigarh in 1935. But the establishment of the Bhilai Steel Plant in 1960 dominated this region, covering an area of over 31 square kilometres and employing more than 50,000 workers. The Bhilai Steel Plant has given rise to Bhilainagar where the permanent workforce of the BSP, their dependents and those serving them constitute the majority. Most of this permanent workforce are migrants from Kerela, AP, West Bengal, etc. and are usually more skilled and better educated than the Chattisgarhi workers.

The BSP intensified the growth of ancilliary industries in this area and now at least 120 small and medium scale units are in operation. The whole region has 18 big, 50 medium and more than 60,000 small industrial units; more than a hundred steel based units, more than a dozen solvent extraction plants, many oxygen, gas and mill cement plants. It is clearly an impressive canvas of industrialisation. And the Bhilai Industries Association spokesman is somewhat right when he claims that "for the industrialisation and development of the Chattisgarh region, some credit also goes to those industrialists who established industries in an environment of initial difficulties and discomforts".

But this industrialisation obviously changed the entire Chattisgarh region and also led to various stresses and strains.

Firstly, the Bhilai Steel Plant and its ancilliary industries have altered the composition of the workforce in the industrial areas, with serious consequences. The population of Bhilainagar in particular has shown a phenomenal growth over the past 30-40 years. The migrant working population has not only increased but they dominate the better positions, because of the traditional backwardness of the Chattisgarhi people.

These regional divisions among the workers have been effectively institutionalised by the capitalists for their own narrow interests. This division has taken an anti-worker stance, so much so that the Chattisgarh Mukti Morcha was forced to take notice of this during the course of their struggle in Nav Bharat Explosive, Nav Bharat Fuse and Hanuman Industries:

> Industrialists always take the side of *pardeshia* people. And Chattisgarhi workers are terrorised and beaten up by these *paradeshia* workers. *Pardeshias* live within the factory premises and work on contract, even on holidays.

This goes on to show that the trade union movement of the Chattisgarh region was not powerful or conscious enough to break this division.

Secondly, Chattisgarh witnessed one of the most intensive industrialisation of modern India. Despite this, however, Chhatisgarh remains one of the most backward regions of the State in terms of the various socio-economic parametres, such as per capita income, average level of literacy, rural electrification or availability of primary health facilities. The region has the largest backward population in the State. Continuous drought, non-irrigated land and unemployment have forced the Chattisgarh people for seasonal or permanent migration in search of livelihood and Bilaspur in particular remains one of the most problem prone areas in the country.

Thirdly, distorted industrialisation which did not care for local needs and environmentally sustainable development, also created different layers of the working class. There are public sector workers fully secured by public sector national network and central trade unions. There are permanent, regular workers of big private industries governed by various wageboards and labour laws. There are *Chattisgarhi* and *Pardeshia* workers. There are contract workers and temporary workers. In fact, the whole lot of ancilliary industries is based only upon contract and temporary workers. This division of the working class has reached such dangerous proportions that the contract workers, who are the nerve-centre of industrialisation here, are also the worst victims of exploitation and suppression and are in total isolation.

IV

IT is unfortunate that the trade union movement of Chattisgarh region also became the victim of this working class division. Though Shankar Guha Niyogi and his Chattisgarh Mukti Morcha very courageously tried to break the isolation of a vast number of contract workers and organised them in militant manner, they too got trapped in their politics because of trade union rivalry, lack of organisational structure and, more importantly, their undefined, unclear political stand.

Actually, narrow economic and class interests based on unsustainable exploitation of natural resources, consumer culture and alienation tends to blind both, capitalists as well as the workers. In the Bhilai industrial complex, various industrialists are not at all defensive or apologetic regarding the contract workers and their problems. Thus the owner of the Simplex Group of Industries, Arvind Shah, clearly states that "there are only 10 permanent workers in maintenance. All the other 2000 are contract workers hired by various contractors because here the work depends mainly upon fluctuating orders. The regularisation of contract workers and betterment of their working condition is not possible because industries have to compete with various small and home based industries in the state and with other industries outside the State."

The spokesperson of Bhilai Industries Association even went further: "There are workers' problems and discontent, but industrialists are not responsible for this. It is not the responsibility of industrialists to undo the workers' poverty and inequality."

It is ironical that the expressions and opinions of the Bhilai Steel Plant workers and their union are not very much different. Besides, the Bhilai Steel Plant workers and their union remain totally aloof from the Bhilai labour movement of the unorganised sector. Even the murder of a trade union leader and the brutal repression of a working class movement in the same region did not shake them. The Steel Workers Union (affiliated to the INTUC) is a recognised union of the BSP since 1960 and its Secretary feels proud when he says: "There are two types of workers in Bhilai. Among public sector workers, there is no sign of any unrest or movement. Apart from the BSP, two other big public sector unions are affiliated to the INTUC. Not even a single worker here belongs to the Niyogi union. There was no activity here even after Niyogi's death. The BSP workers get a minimum wage of more than Rs 2000 per month, housing, medical, education facilities, LTC, scooter allowance, various types of interest free loans and other benefits."

And the General Secretary of the Leftist trade union of the AITUC is more vociferous against the Chattisgarh Mukti Morcha when he states: "There can be no cooperation with the Niyogi union. His union is heavily clouted by Christian missionaries and controversial bodies like the PUCL. Whosoever will fall into the CIA trap will not be alive. No permanent worker supports Niyogi's union. We command the support of permanent, regular workers."

And the General Secretary of the CITU complains: "Although Niyogi had launched a genuine struggle, in that process he also tried to replace the Leftist unions, especially the CITU unions. There was a typical trade union rivalry and the Chattisgarh Mukti Morcha never initiated a joint struggle in the Bhilai industrial area."

Niyogi also felt the pinch of this divided scenario when he painfully narrated a situation in a public meeting during the course of the struggle: "I have two sons. When one son goes to a factory, they curtail his every right, and exploit him cruelly. When my son stands against this exploitation, demands high rights, they give knife to my other unemployed son and say, 'Go stab your brother'."

This is the most unfortunate aspect of the trade union movement today that after Niyogi's murder, there was not even a token protest in the Bhilai Steel Plant and other public sector plants, where thousands of workers work. There was not even a one day industrial strike in the Bhilai industrial areas, where every central trade union exists, with its own substantial following. When central trade unions and federations organised a one-day industrial strike against the new economic policies of the government, there was not even a mention of the death of this trade union leader or of the heroic struggle of Bhilai's unorganised workers. On the other hand, the Chattisgarh Mukti Morcha is organising thousands of contract workers, but its struggle is separated from the nationwide workers upsurge against the new economic policies.

V

SHANKAR Guha Niyogi and his Chattisgarh Mukti Morcha were successful in diversifying their movement to various streams of society and they also tried to build an alternative political force in the region. Militant and expanding trade unionism seems to be a solid basis for this alternative politics. The trade union politics of Niyogi proved that the working class movement and politics can be a powerful vehicle for social transformation and political mobilisation.

Workers in the unorganised sector had been given priority focus by Niyogi and his organisation. The Bhilai unorganised-contract labour movement changed the area in a number of ways. Thousands of unorganised workers of this area acquired a new sense of identity and courage. The movement successfully broke the existing traditional exploitative structure based on the nexus of industrialists, politicians, administration and even trade unions.

However, the Bhilai labour movement also brings into focus some serious weaknesses of the trade union movement today. Till a few years back, the central trade unions, especially the Left ones, were quite active and powerful in the Bhilai industrial complex. But they slowly left their militancy and their activities died down. When the Chattisgarh Mukti Morcha tried to fill this serious void, the traditional trade unions did not cooperate with his movement. They failed to realise the importance of the Chattisgarh Mukti Morcha, especially in the era of new economic policies and the upsurge of BJP's communalism.

The Chattisgarh Mukti Morcha's movement also proved that there is a rising trend of autonomous working class movement, with its specific ideological and regional character. Whether it is Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra or Tamil Nadu, the traditional Left parties have failed to grasp this situation and in fact they are always visible in their opposition to these autonomous, regional movements.

On the other hand, it is equally true that the Chattisgarh Mukti Morcha and its labour movement was hostile to both the Rightists and traditional Left forces in the region. They searched for an abstractly defined '*Chattisgarhi* identity' and a weak organisational structure. This sometimes made their movement directionless. A recent reflection of this is the fact that the Chattisgarh Mukti Morcha's political articulation always swung between the Congress and the Janata Dal during the recent elections.

But this is the right time to ask certain questions: When the various conservative, communal and neo-colonial forces have become aggressive on the national and organised plane, is it possible to counter them with regional autonomy and militancy alone? Is it correct to let people like Niyogi be murdered and keep such movements isolated? Will Niyogi's death give some impetus to some serious rethinking in our trade union movement today? ■

A Demeaning Exercise

BALRAJ MEHTA

The annual festival of multinational business corporations at Davos this year was the big event for the Government of India and the Indian media. The selected group of media-men who were invited to accompany the Prime Minister, P.V. Narasimha Rao, to cover the event went gaga on this dream assignment. The Prime Minister of India, it was reported with all the fervour that could be commanded, got as many as 40 minutes at prime time before the glittering assembly of tycoons, with its titular head himself presiding over it. They did not let pass the churlish comparison either that the Prime Minister of Pakistan was given only 15 minutes of their benign attention.

It was, however, not just the points scored in the Indo-Pak rivalry which was the cause of so much satisfaction and glee. Thrilling also was the certificate handed down by the President of the so-called World Economic Forum, R. Klaus Schwab, that India at last "has the right Prime Minister at the right moment", evidently for the multinational corporations to do profitable business with. If he also added the damper that foreign investments to India, which the Prime Minister had gone to woo, would not necessarily follow him, this was appreciated as admirable realism which is the very hallmark of the world of big business.

Back home, after due care and assessment of the performance of Narasimha Rao at Davos, there was no hesitation in the media to hail "super salesman Rao", in the job of "marketing India". In the lingo of advertising and marketing, which is becoming very fashionable currently for those under the spell of market forces, it has been adjudged that when "even the finest products need packaging and marketing" and India being "far from the finest", Narasimha Rao had done an excellent job. It is evidently no longer considered demeaning in interested quarters openly to project, India as no more than a commodity for sale in the world market Narasimha Rao as the super salesman engaged in this difficult and exacting task. What may only make the cheer leaders of the effort that their hero, super salesman Rao, is putting up for marketing India somewhat uneasy is the messy state of affairs at home where this effort is not fully appreciated and the hurdles in his way are increasing and becoming more and more difficult to negotiate. The ideas of sovereignty, self-respect and self-reliance obviously seem worn out, incongruous and irksome to the marketing India enthusiasts.

What has, however, our super salesman Rao been able to do in the business of marketing India? He undoubtedly went in the heady environment of Davos for a lot of rhetoric laced with many cliches and sentimental outpourings, such as, for instance, presenting himself as a 71 year old man with 50 years of business in politics who expected to be trusted when he suggested that he had made India a nice and welcome place for foreign investment, that there was national consensus in favour of the red carpet he had laid out for foreign capital and there was no rolling it back. Narasimha Rao may have managed to be self-hypnotised when making such claims about his durability in the saddle and his ability to order affairs according to his lights. But he could not have carried much conviction or credibility with hard-headed businessmen at Davos or elsewhere who are still waiting and watching before committing themselves to invest their money in India except with great selectivity and care. This is evident from the inspection visits of businessmen and their delegations to India that have been taking place.

The Japanese and West German business delegations which visited around the time as the Davos assembly, laid down many conditions—21 to be precise—for acceptance before they would be in a position to invest in India in a big way such as the government headed by Narasimha Rao desires as the panacea for India under the programme of foreign financed structural adjustment of the Indian economy. They made it very clear that whatever "dramatic departure" from its past restrictive policy on foreign investment the Indian Government might have announced did not matter. What they sought was the comparative advantage among different investment markets. As a latecomer to the harshly competitive global market in prevailing conditions, India is required to be a better place than other developing countries to attract foreign capital. Hence the lists of "requests" which different foreign business interests are addressing the government in India. They add up to a whole package of preferential treatment for foreign capital not only in comparison to Indian business enterprise in India but also in respect of their competitors abroad. The latest of such requests is that protection to not only corporate business but also small-scale industry in India must be withdrawn.

Significantly, the foreign business delegations are making the point of their interest in only "pre-empting and competing" with rivals when and if any one of them might try to "capture" the Indian market. How far India would be willing and able to play on the rivalry among foreign interests for the control of the Indian market is, of course, a moot point. It must not be missed, however, that this rivalry too is being and will be increasingly used to extract competitive advantages at the cost, above all, of the development of indigenous industry and business enterprise in order to destroy all impulses and processes of self-reliant and self-sustaining socio-economic development.

◆

NARASIMHA Rao's attempt at Davos to lure foreign capital with the prospect of the exploitation of the "huge Indian market"—"if you get down to the people, it is mind boggling"—could not have carried much conviction or credibility either. The foreign investor is not interested in getting down to the people with no effective demand in the market. He goes for quick returns on his investment in foreign markets for recycling his investment resources in competing markets as well as security reasons. He, therefore, normally speaking, plans for the recovery of his investment in full within a period of five years and whatever comes afterwards is a bonanza for him. Foreign investment flows on the basis of the effective demand in the market of the host country at the time investment is made.

The foreign investor has no interest in going down to the mass of the impoverished and deprived in India or any other developing country. His assessment of the effective demand in the competing markets determines his investment priorities. The offer made by P.V. Narasimha Rao of all manner of "concessions" for foreign investors who would down get down to the people of India was indeed fatuous. His bright idea of putting down priority areas for foreign investment—lipstick versus fertiliser factory—too was pointless. It must have, in fact, caused cynical mirth among the tycoons at Davos. They must be well aware of the flourishing cosmetic industry catering to the whims and fancies of the affluent in India in recent years and the good business this has been for foreign companies. But the high place of Pepsi and Coca Cola in the government's order of priorities for foreign investment must have tickled them no end when Rao talked of this being no time yet to produce lipstick in India.

Narasimha Rao was, after all, not such a smart salesman as has been tried to be made out. In fact, he skirted or sidetracked issues of substance. So far as the people of India are concerned, it was a demeaning exercise in many ways. The very idea that foreign capital has special attributes to help in the striving for the development of the Indian economy and the uplift of the mass of the people is demeaning. Foreign capital generates profits from investment in the host country by the exploitation of its natural resources and labour. The appreciation of the value of investment and profits made helps to enlarge foreign stakes and eventually enable the foreign owners of capital to bring under their control large and strategic segments of the economy. This stage in the role of foreign capital has been reached under the present political regime over which Narasimha Rao presides.

The minority government headed by Narasimha Rao on its part, meanwhile, is becoming more and more reckless to make India look a paradise for foreign capital and Indian big business with collaboration tie-ups with foreign capital. It has used even the Republic Day celebrations to that end. The customary celebration of the fortythird Republic Day was overshadowed by many anxieties, severe tensions and grave apprehensions. But the official ceremonies did not care to touch any joyous chords of the people. The gloomy and forlorn flag hoisting in Srinagar by the leader of the official Opposition party under the protection of security forces from which the commonfolk, the ordinary citizens of the republic were barred alone attracted attention world-wide as the main event of the day in India. But it was not and could not be an event

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which uplifted the spirits of the people of India or strengthened their hope and faith in the democratic, secular and socialist commitments enshrined in the Constitution of the republic. The attempts by the government to pass gimmicks for policy—from rigged elections in Punjab, make-believe planning of economic development, to a "revamped" public distribution system for vulnerable consumers and a fund set aside to partially compensate loss of jobs for the working people are turning to be pathetic.

The award giving exercise of the government on the occasion of the Republic Day deserves notice in this context. J.R.D. Tata may himself have been "stunned" by the award of *Bharat Ratna* to him. But the award also gave a message which must not be missed. Tata was being modest when he said: "I am just a businessmen" and averred that he had not done "anything to deserve this prestigious award". But he had accepted it "since it is the decision of the Government of India". Businessmen in India, however, are quite sanguine about their position. L.M. Thapar, a leading industrialist, said the other day that mere economic policy pronouncements such as had been made by the present government would not mean much unless corresponding changes are carried down the line at the "political and administrative level" It has not been fortuitous either that in the customary address of the President of India on the eve of the Republic Day, it was found necessary to call for a moratorium on all bandhs and strikes and strict discipline. This was obviously inspired by the hope of smoothening the way to the great transformation being pushed through is the economic as much as social and political order.

The message for the people of India is thus loud and clear. Businessmen in India have acquired an enhanced status in the present political regime. It marks a break with the traditions and ethos of the national movement which won freedom from the colonial yoke and established the Republic of India with commitments to democratic, socialist and secular order enshrined in its Constitution. What is being ushered in now is the businessmen's republic. It is remarkable that while its awards of *Bharat Ratna* for Subhas Bose and Maulana Azad have evoked controversy, *Bharat Ratna* to J.R.D. Tata has not been demurred at all, not even by the Left political parties. ■

Centre's Budgetary Position and its Effects on Allocation and Growth

K. OBULESU

The rapidly deteriorating financial position of the Indian Government is attributed, among other reasons, to the ever expanding functional responsibilities, inelastic financial resources, failure to maximise tax effort, impact of vast capital outlay on the programme of planned economic development,[1] excessive non-development expenditure, outlay on productive schemes which do not produce enough and improvident financial management.[2] Every one of them may be significant but collectively they bedevil the Indian fiscal scene.[3]

Table 1 gives the fiscal scenario of the Central Government. Between 1975-76 and 1978-79 the revenue account of the Centre was consistently showing a surplus since the year 1979-80. It shows a deficit which on an average was Rs 186 crores per annum in the period from 1975-76 to 1979-80. The overall deficit of the Centre during this period was, on an average, Rs 1062 crores per annum. This position had somewhat changed considerably during the period 1980-85 when the revenue account of the Centre showed a consistent deficit which, on an average, was Rs 2099 crores per annum while the average overall deficit increased to Rs 2137 crores per annum.[4] This position worsened still further during 1985-92 when the revenue account of the Centre has been showing a deficit of Rs 11,240 crores per annum and an overall deficit of Rs 7731 crores per annum.

Highlights of 1991-92 Budget

The Budget for the year 1991-92 presented by the renowned economist, Dr Manmohan Singh, aims at securing the macro-economic balance in the Indian economy by reducing the different types of deficits[5] which are shown in Table 2.

Additional resource mobilisation is attempted in a modest way to step up revenue receipts and certain subsidies like the one on the fertilisers or reduce borrow/removed with a view to reducing the revenue deficit. The overall deficit is also reduced compared with the earlier years. Fiscal deficit is proposed to be reduced from (Rs 43,331 crores) 8.4 per cent of the GDP to (Rs 37,727 crores) 6.5 per cent of the GDP. The Budget had been preceded by the devaluation of the currency to the

TABLE 1: **Budgetary Position of the Central Government: 1975-92**

(Rs crores)

Year	*Revenue account*	*Capital account*	*Overall (+)surplus or (-)deficit*
1975-76	+887	-1254	-367
1976-77	+298	-429	-131
1977-78	+430	-1363	-933
1978-79	+292	-1798	-1506
1979-80	-976	-1401	-2377
Annual Average 1975-80	-186	-1249	-1062
1980-81	-2037	-440	-2477
1981-82	-384	-1007	-1391
1982-83	-1308	-347	-1655[1]
1983-84	-2540	+1124	-1416[2]
1984-85	-4224	+479	-3745
Annual Average 1980-85	-2099	-381	-2137
1985-86	-6372	+1057	-5315
1986-87	-8212	-49	-8261
1987-88	-9629	+3813	-5816
1988-89	-11115	+5473	-5642
1989-90	-11912	+1320	-10592
1990-91 (RE)	-17585	+6813	-10772
1991-92 (BE)	-13854	+6135	-7719
Annual Average 1985-92	-11240	+3509	-7731

Note: 1. Excludes Rs 1743 crores of loans to clear overdrafts of States.
2. Excludes Rs 400 crores of loans to clear overdrafts of States.

Source: Report on Currency and Finance, Vol. II (Various Issues), Bombay
The Hindu, July 25, 1991, p. 11.

The author belongs to the Department of Economics, Post-Graduate Centre, S.V. University, Kavali, Andhra Pradesh.

extent of 18 per cent, with a view to facilitating the borrower of funds from the IMF. The Industrial Policy announced subsequent to the presentation of the Budget provides for a large measure of liberalisation in industrial investment and enterprise. These recent initiatives have attempted to reduce the fiscal distortions and promote the market-friendly approach to development.

Fiscal Effects on Allocation and Growth

The developing countries of the Thrid World belong neither to the classical world nor the Keynesian world of depression. Their fundamental problem is under-development of resources and supply constraints rather than demand deficiency. The market mechanism is so dysfunctional that it results in gross misallocation of resources that governments are forced to resort to greater intervention.[6] But the governments are reluctant to mobilise financial resources in a non-inflationary way.[7] Increased resources through deficit financing on Keynesian grounds has led to accentuation of inflationary tendencies in most developing countries rather inflationary tendencies in most developing countries rather than stimulating their economic growth and development.

On the whole, the tax revenue has been inadequate to meet the development needs.[8] As such the only alternatives left with the government have been the programme of public borrowings, external aid and deficit financing on a very large scale. The effects of all these measures have been definitely inflationary during the past. In such a situation planning targets get adversely affected.

That deficit financing has a positive role in financing development expenditure is widely conceded. But there is a controversy regarding the ceiling to be imposed on deficit financing; the government's recourse to credit from the Reserve Bank of India has been steadily increasing during the 1970s and early 1980s. The total monetised deficit of the Union Government for the Seventh Plan period was Rs 39,488 crores upto March 30, 1990. The Seventh Plan document had envisaged a total uncovered resources gap of Rs 14,000 crores at 1984-85 prices. Even allowing for the rate of inflation over the Plan period, this projection has been exceeded by a substantial margin. This has grave implications for the Eighth Plan financing especially if a consensus is emerging on a 5.3 per cent growth rate in real GDP per annum during 1990-95. According to the Ninth Finance Commission Report, the Centre's revenue deficit will be Rs 80,638 crores during 1990-95.

TABLE 2: **Budget at a Glance: 1991-92**

Particulars	*1989-90 actuals*	*1990-91 (RE)*	*1991-92 (BE)*
Revenue receipts	52296	57381	67529
Revenue expenditure	64208	74966	81383
Revenue deficit	11912	17585	13854
Total receipts	82314	95945	105703
Total expenditure	92906	106717	113422
Budgetary deficit	10592	10772	7719
Fiscal deficit	35630	43331	37727

RE = Revised Estimate; BE = Budget Estimate.
Source: *The Hindu*, July 25, 1991, Madras, p. 11.

The Planning Commission finalised in 1989 an aggregate outlay for the Eighth Plan of Rs 650,000 crores at the 1989-90 prices tied to an annual growth rate of six per cent.[9] The uncovered resources gap assumed was in excess of Rs 40,000 crores. The Ninth Finance Commission says that it has taken care to check whether the transfers recommended would result in a situation where the Centre could not have a reasonable outlay in the Eighth Plan. It noted that around Rs 94,200 crores of budget support to the Central Plan at the 1989-90 prices should be possible during 1990-95 with the revenue deficit contained within a reasonable level specifically on controlling growth in revenue expenditure. The final Report of Commission has this to say: "Financial experts are agreed that the *sine qua non* for controlling the growth of revenue expenditure in the avoidance of inflation. This, in turn, requires strict limits to be placed on deficit financing."

The Nobel laureate Buchanan[10] has suggested a constitutional amendment in the USA to prohibit deficit financing. He notes that legislatures want more and more public spending in their constituencies, but are reluctant to raise taxes to pay for this spending. Hence, they have an inbuilt bias in favour of budget deficits, which have now made the USA the biggest debtor of the world. India needs checks and balances far more than the USA does.

The benevolent theory of state justifies unbalanced budgets resulting in deficit finance on welfare grounds. The predatory theory of state proceeds on the assumption that the ruling class alone benefits from increasing government expenditure at the cost of the neglected masses. The former theory justifies deficit financing even in the context of growing fiscal crisis while the latter theory is opposed to it. The predatory state encourages what Jagdish Bhagwati[11] calls directly unproductive profit-seeking (DUP) activities. There is a strong case in favour of automatic systems of control rather than discretionary control and moving away from controls to incentives which will minimise the budgetary deficit and hence the resort to deficit financing.

When public deficits need to be reduced, the economic cost of raising more revenue must be weighed against cost of cutting public spending. The only way to resolve the tension between austerity and growth is to combine fundamental fiscal reform with other measures in trade, industry, agriculture and financing. The narrow public revenue base in many developing economies can be expanded by cutting non-Plan expenditure, improved tax administration, broadening the tax base, lowering the tax rate and increased reliance on user charges for public services.[12] India is no exception and must resort to these measures in an increasing degree during the ensuing plan periods. ■

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AN APPEAL

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22-11-1991 Yours sincerely,

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Has the Economy Turned the Corner?

N.K. SETH

The Finance Minister ought to be a worried man these days but apparently he is not. At any rate not much. One of the reasons for this complacency obviously is that he is hardly concerned about the political fallout of his new economic policies. That, apparently, is the headache of the Prime Minister. So far as he is concerned, he has convinced himself, and possibly the Prime Minister, that after India's success in obtaining a sizeable loan of more than two billion dollars and up to seven billion dollars from the IMF if the policy prescriptions of the World Bank and the IMF are followed, the Indian economy has virtually turned the corner. He is happy to tell the nation that the foreign exchange reserves which stood at Rs 2600 crores six months ago are more than Rs 8000 crores now. He does not explain how much of this increase is due to compression of imports, how much because of the loan from the IMF and how much due to the increase in exports following devaluation.

The truth of the matter is that the spurt in exports has not materialised, nor is it likely to materialise in the near future. The economy right now is perhaps in a more precarious state than what it was before the 'economic reforms' were initiated. The revenue deficit has not been reduced. It continues to be a whopping figure of Rs 13,850 crores. There have been shortfalls in customs revenue (Rs 3500 crores), excise duty (Rs 1000 crores), the outstanding IT dues are Rs 1300 crores. There is, therefore, hardly any hope of cutting the fiscal deficit to 6.5 per cent of the GDP as promised to the IMF unless there is drastic cut in military expenditure and in subsidies; and both cuts are virtually beyond the capacity of the Finance Minister.

When the Managing Director of the IMF was in India in October last year, he was quite categorical that the IMF would like India to cut its military expenditure. This has now been confirmed by the Governors of the Bank at the IMF annual meeting who reportedly agreed "that the possibility of military cuts in the developing countries deserves very careful study, as it would permit transfer of human and financial resources to help development and reduce poverty". The question is whether India can easily brush aside this advice from the IMF claiming that it is none of the IMF's business to interfere in such matters, when India is practically at the mercy of the IMF.

The problem with reduction in subsidies is no less difficult. The most significant subisidies are in the food and agriculture sector, a politically sensitive area. A World Bank study revealed that "subsidies for food and agricultural inputs totalled Rs 135 billion annually in 1989-1990 (3.1 per cent of the GDP) and exceeded public investments (Rs 110 billion), high input subsidies to agriculture for irrigation, electricity, fertiliser and credit". Having regard to the rich farmers' influential lobby which has successfully resisted so far even a debate on agricultural income tax, got loans waived arbitrarily and procurement prices increased, it is very doubtful if the Finance Minister can reduce the subsidies in this sector to any appreciable extent, despite the fact that "even moderate growth in the sector has come at a high cost, both to the Budget and to the economy". The foodgrain output of China is more than double that of India without such extensive subsidies to the agricultural sector as in India.

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SO far as the effort to cut public expenditure is concerned, the recent announcement of the Prime Minister about cut in the government staff and telephones, etc. need not be taken too seriously. In any case, it does not amount to much. If the government was really serious about cut in public expenditure, one may legitimately ask if the proposed Assembly for Delhi is a move towards economy. A total lack of realism and political will is obvious from the fact that an ambitious Eighth Plan with an outlay of about Rs 4 lakh crores in the public sector is being formulated. The Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission has, however, admitted that the whole Plan will have to be financed from borrowed money, as the balance from current account is negative. One may very well ask if, in that case, there can be a Plan at all. Have we not already borrowed enough?

In fact, it is our propensity to borrow money to finance our extravagance which has placed India in the present state of virtual bankruptcy. We are already in an internal debt trap when we have to borrow more in order to repay the old loans but it hardly matters as these loans can always be paid in rupees by just printing notes. But the problem with foreign debt is different; they have to be repaid in hard currency which is in acute shortage in India. India is now the third most indebted country with a foreign debt of nearly 80 billion dollars and she has the liability to repay five to six billion dollars annually. A stage may soon be reached when we have to borrow from the IMF and the World Bank merely to repay the old loans. No one knows better than the Finance Minister that the grant of a loan from the IMF is not the end but the beginning of our problems.

Unfortunately, however, in spite of this, the Finance Minister continues to place more and more reliance on loans from multinational agencies like the IMF. He has admitted that India will have to depend on their help for the next three years or more, till adequate foreign investment is forthcoming. It is obvious from this that he is not only really worried but is also nervous as his economic reforms do not seem to be yielding results and he does not see the light at the end of the tunnel. Devaluation of the rupee has not resulted in any increase in exports; in fact there has been a fall in foreign exchange earnings from exports. Foreign investors, including the NRIs, do not seem to have been sufficiently impressed by the 'economic reforms' undertaken by him to invest money in India. Compression of imports and credit squeeze have only resulted in recession in industry and indiscriminate and hurried cuts across the board in subsidies have given rise to massive price increases in essential commodities. The result is that the common man is suffering and the Finance Minister seems to be unmindful of it. There are increases in the prices of commodities of daily needs like bread, milk, wheat, rice, sugar and the increases are quite substantial. And a hefty hike in taxes, direct and indirect, in the next Budget is on the cards. So the common man will be squeezed between runaway inflation and high taxes.

It seems as though the present government fears that it has a "potentially shortlived mandate for reform" and decided to capitalise on it "in a climate of crisis" as recommended by the World Bank in its 1992 Report. But the big question is whether this shock therapy, which is bound to result in mass unemployment and runaway inflation, can salvage the country's economy. The Finance Minister should know better than others that the transition from a centrally planned to a market economy which is being tried here is a painful and long drawn process. It would be unwise and risky to hasten it too much as events in the Soviet Union have demonstrated. The patience of the people should not be overtaxed as the PM himself seems to have realised recently.

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THERE is no doubt that China, a Communist country, has also realised that there is no alternative to the market economy in the new world, but it is trying to plan a smooth transition from the command to the market economy so as to avoid social and political upheavals as in the USSR. The first thing China has wisely done is not to depend on loans on multinational agencies like the IMF which enables them to pursue their economic reforms reasonably independently, unlike us. Further, the Finance Minister has himself admitted that while China has succeeded in attracting more than 50 billion dollar foreign investment, India has had a foreign investment of only 200 million dollars so far. In fact, according to the latest World Bank Debt Tables, India has had no net direct foreign investment after 1970. The real worry of the Finance Minister should, therefore, be how best and how quickly he can create a hospitable climate for foreign investment in India as China has done rather than worry about taking further loans from the IMF in the next three years. Sizeable foreign investment can not only help to partially overcome the foreign exchange problem but also assist import of latest technology which can develop exports through competition and cost efficiency.

In any case, India has still a long way to go before reaching the goal of a 'market-friendly economy'. She has many hurdles to overcome, as observed by *The Economist* in the "World in 1992":

> There are many gaps in the reform. The overblown public enterprises (especially the inefficient banks) and the bureaucracy remain untouched. Taxes are unreformed. It is next to impossible for companies to shut down and sack their workers. Resistance, especially to freer foreign investment, will be offered by the bureaucracy; and the Congress Party, which has a parliamentary minority and is nervous over the reforms, may turn on Mr Rao and Mr Singh. The fate of further reform in the Budget of March will be a big test.

The Finance Minister is presently under tremendous pressure from the World Bank and the IMF to accelerate the pace of economic reforms and the next Budget is bound to be an exceptionally harsh one in an effort to reduce the Budget deficit.

But the million dollar question is whether, despite all the heroic efforts which are being made to liberalise the economy, the economy will turn the corner and, if so, when and at what cost. It is almost certain that the economic reforms are not likely to yield any positive results; at any rate, not for the next three years or more. In the meantime, they are likely to aggravate the problems for the common man with massive unemployment, recession and inflation which could prove politically counterproductive for the government with a pro-poor image and an electoral promise to rollback prices within a hundred days. It is now time for the PM to step in and consider carefully the pros and cons of accelerating the pace of economic reforms which will have far-reaching consequences. Or follow the Chinese strategy of carefully planning a slow and smooth transition to the market-friendly economy, avoiding economic chaos, social and political unrest as witnessed in the former USSR. On balance, it looks safer to follow the Chinese model and avoid hurting the common man too much. ■

COMMUNICATION

Kashmir: Meeting the Challenge!

Sometime in October there was a press report that some "eminent citizens from all walks of life" had appealed to their fellow citizens to launch a Save Kashmir Movement all over the country and to demand "an unequivocal declaration from the government that it would treat all those who carry arms against the state as outlaws and it would have no negotiation with them".

There is little doubt that the demands of the "eminent citizens" were the outcome of the Home Minister's offer to the militants, when heavily guarded, he was enjoying his trip to Srinagar with his family and friends; the offer indicated that the government was willing to hold a dialogue with them provided they were willing to participate without any precondition.

Having said this, S.B. Chavan must have felt jittery, for having said too much. Flustered and confused, he corrected himself and quickly declared that after assuming power the new Congress Government saw no reason for any change in policy; he went even a little further, and made it clear that the Centre had no package deal to offer to the people of Kashmir. Though the militants rejected the offer unitedly, to the "eminent citizens" and also to one of our national dailies, the offer was a message to the militants, and it meant that "New Delhi's priorities are being dictated by those with guns".

Alarmed and resentful, the newly formed Save Kashmir Front organised a symposium on 'Kashmir: And How to Meet the Challenge!' It was held under tight security and only those who had been invited with cards were permitted to enter the Mavalankar Hall, the venue of the meeting. The speakers were well-known pillars of *Hindutva* and covertly anti-Muslim, and the invited, who had filled the hall, represented a veritable microcosm of the high caste Hindu India. Apart from the Kashmiri Pandits who were busy distributing sheaves of their 'Appeal to the Nation', one was greeted with *"Jai Shri Ram"* by the *Ram-bhakta* RSS men (a large number of them must have been specially invited as their Joint General Secretary, Prof Rajendra Singh, was one of the four speakers). Important BJP politicians were also there—with an unmistakable air of smugness, as no meeting on Kashmir can be held without their star speaker, L.K. Advani!

It was not easy to make out how many of those distinguished men, whose names appeared on the invitation card as members of the Kashmir Front, were present in the hall, but it might be of interest to mention a few: there were two ex-editors, Girilal Jain and Arun Shourie; Prabhash Joshi, the editor of *Jansatta*; and Swapan Dasgupta of *The Times of India*; the retired CAG, T.N. Chaturvedi, who is also a member of the Bharatiya Janata Party; two retired Ambassadors of the Government of India, one Foreign Secretary, and a Professor of JNU; the former Principal Information Officer, D.N. Munshi, was the convener. Among the four speakers, two have been mentioned earlier, the other two were Shakdher, the former Chief Election Commissioner, and Jagmohan.

Advani, the first to speak, knows how to politicise meetings; never shrill, never once raising his voice, completely at his ease, he killed several birds with his short half-an-hour speech. Pseudo-secularists lay bleeding, so did the government which "still talks of political solution", and all those who had given "special status" to Kashmir, "a grave discrimination against Kashmir", which, he recalled, "even, a Muslim member of the Constituent Assembly, Hasrat Mohani, had pointed out". By-elections not far off, the emphasis was not on

Ayodhya but on unity, "the test for India's unity today is not so much Ayodhya, but Kashmir". And "pseudo-liberalism", which argues that "if somebody demands secession he must have some genuine grievances", must be condemned unreservedly, said Advani. He lamented that "in their own country, two lakh Kashmiri Pandits have become refugees, but what is more tragic, that nobody even treats it as a problem, but if a person like me talks about it we are labelled communal". But, he assured the Pandits, "we will have to see how soon they can be sent back home." In that emotionally surcharged hall, these words had a tremendous impact; and when pointing to him, Shakdher said that India deserves a Prime Minister like Advani, there was tremendous applause signifying approval.

Prof Rajendra Singh is well-known for his crusade against the teaching of English, a foreign language, in schools; he condemned the double standard practised by the "leaders of the country". It was unfair to tell the common man in the Valley to be brave when the then "Home Minister had himself buckled under terrorist pressure and released militants in exchange for his kidnapped daughter," Professor Singh said. With the recent revelation that there have been several cases of the release of Congress-I leaders' relatives held hostage in exchange for militants, Prof Singh's criticism becomes valid. There is little realisation that indulging in such shady deals, which might be kept hidden from the Indian public, will make the government look very small indeed in the eyes of the very militants they want to exterminate.

There was general agreement that Pandit Nehru should have handed over the integration of Jammu and Kashmir to Sardar Patel. Shakdher recalled what the Sardar was alleged to have told Pandit Mavalankar: "I might integrate the 564 Principalities faster than Panditji integrates one."

Jagmohan gave several examples to illustrate how Article 370—the root of today's trouble—had alienated the people of Kashmir from the rest of India. "People who came to Kashmir in 1947, still do not have the right to vote for the Legislative Assembly, and we go on fighting for the Rights of the South Africans, the Palestinians," he remarked sarcastically. "Never buy carpets from Muslims," he warned, "for the money will go to the terrorists." But most of the facts he related are in his *My Frozen Turbulence in Kashmir;* the book is having a record sale, running neck to neck with *Crisis and Credibility* of B.G. Verghese. Both sized up the Human Rights people with rare perception; while Verghese implied that they were a pack of liars, Jagmohan was more explicit during his speech. He said in his inimitable language that "the Human Rights groups had descended like locusts in the Valley, as soon as the situation had started improving".

Though there was unanimous agreement that Aricle 370 must be abrogated, and that no political solution shall be permitted, Jagmohan was the only one who gave the prescription for meeting the challenge in Kashmir. According to him, conventional tactics would fail to counter the menace of the terrorists in the Valley. "To be effective," he said, "We have to organise guerilla tactics to counter with the guerillas in the Valley."

There was an air of exhilaration when the meeting was over. The Kashmiri Pandits knew who their friends were, and the BJP knew they had invested in a fertile territory. The meeting spelt out the specific demand of the BJP during the *ekta yatra* of Dr Joshi: *"Article 370 hatao, atankwad mitao, desh bachao!"*

The Front activists held a huge demonstration in front of the Parliament House, in spite of the police lathicharge. to denounce the government's get-together of discredited men who had fled from Kashmir, and cannot show their face in the Valley.

The Home Minister has made it pitifully clear that the government has no policy on Kashmir.

In order to hide its bankcruptcy, however, the government has virtually accepted Jagmohan's recipe of repression, calling it euphemistically flushing out; daily, any number of young men are being killed—flushed out. Whose sons are they? Whose brothers? Nobody knows, the family is kept in the dark. Those who are arrested are sent to the Army Interrogation Centres there being "humanely treated", administered only "mild pressure" since "no torture or third degree liable to cause serious injury is permissible" (*Crisis and Credibility*, p. 141); the suspects are let off. Hardly alive, they have to be carried to the Shoura Medical Institute by some citizens. There they lie, boys in their teens, with deep incisions on their heads and chests, and young men, critically injured—not just two whom the *Eyewitness* film of *The Hindustan Times* had interviewed (*HT*, November 4, 1991) with multiple perforations of intestines, stomach, and liver.

These atrocities must stop before the government can convince the world that there is nothing to hide.

25 Nizamuddin East
New Delhi

Amiya Rao

When Victory is Not Mandate

SHASTRI RAMACHANDRAN

The Congress party has outdone itself by surpassing its own expectations in the elections in Punjab. This is cause for concern rather than cheer. The evident lack of any euphoria in the Congress underlines this. In fact the party is almost embarrassed to have won as it did.

It would be simplistic, if not patently incorrect, to read the results as the triumph of parliamentary forces over the predatory grip of extremism in the State. The fact that the motions of a parliamentary election have been gone through do not in any way validate the assumption that the normal democratic political process has been brought nearer. Democracy, in its familiar form, means elections. But all elections do not mean democracy nor do they reinforce democratic practices and values. Punjab proves the point.

In the first-past-the-post situation, three-fourths of the seats can be won with a third of the votes. The 28 per cent turnout of voters on polling day had already established that whichever party or combination of parties emerged victorious, the result would not be representative. The results now, even if the Congress has managed between 10 and 14 per cent of the votes, sanction the exception as the rule: that a "popular" rule is actually possible, almost certain, without a mandate. This is clearly a case of extreme constitutionalism. And, constitutional extremism has repeatedly proved to be counter-productive in the case of Punjab. The plethora of laws to curb terrorism and the successive measures in the last 57 months to restore normality have only worsened the situation.

After the 1985 Rajiv-Longowal Accord, the Congress committeed the folly of allowing a situation where the parties to the accord opposed each other in the elections. When the Akali Dal trounced the Congress, Rajiv Gandhi, much to the chagrin of traditional Congressmen, had the grace and candour to admit: "The party has lost but the nation has won." Today, in its hour of victory, the discomfiture of the Congress is telling.

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THE elections have reinforced the cynical conviction that it is force alone that can triumph in Punjab and that the political choice is between overawed by "adequate security" to participate in the 'political process' or being terrorised out of the turf by the fundamentalist-extremists. In the event, the fact that 72 per cent of the electorate did not come out to vote flies in the face of claims that the confidence-building measures have worked. If the 1989 elections to the Lok Sabha dismayed the country because of the victory of the militants, through coercoin and terror, the character of the victory is not very different now. The only difference is in the nature of the force. Intimidatory protection in the name of "adequate security" is a poor democratic alternative to terrorism.

The Congress has other reasons to be embarrassed. Its victory has sharpened the communal cleavage in Punjab. The results represent Hindu consolidation, which is ironically compelling the Congress to choose a Sikh for the Chief Minister's job. That the Congress, and not the Bharatiya Janata Party, has been the beneficiary of this communal consolidation will alienate the Sikhs further and increase hostilities.

This outcome of Hindu consolidation suggests one of two things: either that there is some truth in the charge that the party "managed" votes through the malpractices it has been accused of; or that the party, and not the BJP, has emerged as the main hope of Hindu communalism in Punjab. Neither of these can be comforting to the Congress. Yet, Hindu communalism and the consequences of "popular rule" by this elected by unrepresentative "majority" with a Sikh as a masccot will be the cause of the dangers ahead in Punjab.

The elections have pushed the Congress into the same position as a target for Sikh hostility where it was after "Operation Bluestar" and the 1984 Lok Sabha elections. The conspicuous lack of any attempt to ensure the participation of the Sikhs in the elections made this inevitable. It is possible, as reports suggest, that the Congress has lines of communication to some of the militant groups and factions (there being no identifiable Akali parliamentary party) and these would be utilised in the aftermath of the elections to bring them round with concessions and deals. Even if that were to materialise it would not be a proper or just substitute for the utter lack of legitimacy of the "popular" government. Essentially, this is a manipulative route and in Punjab, as the record shows from 1982, this approach has done more damage than help to end the bloodletting.

The secessionists have been provided precisely with the situation they need to press ahead their claims for "liberation" from a "Hindu-dominated state". They will advance every imaginable argument to buttress their case for "self-determination". Regardless of how perverse the logic of this campaign is, the election result will serve to enhance their appeal in a situation where passion rules over reason.

A sense of urgency in pursuing the cases against those suspected of instigating the 1984 riots could have succeeded in winning over at least a section of the moderate Sikhs. Instead the government not only dragged its feet but also went on the offensive to assert its odiously regressive stand on human rights. In the context of the Punjab elections, the Sikhs were bound to perceive it as a provocative rationalisation of the government's reluctance to proceed against the guilty. The healing touch that Mrs Indira Gandhi spoke of has hardly been in evidence. Instead fresh wounds were inflicted on the Sikh community and psyche in 1984 and these were further exacerbated in successive years.

The elections were an opportunity for the Congress to send out the crucial signal that the Sikhs would be dealing with a Congress party markedly different from the one in the eighties. In this critical test the Congress has failed for it has pushed Punjab further beyond the pale of parliamentary politics. ■

SETHURAMAN: Railway Budget

(Continued from page 2)

transport bottlenecks and promote development of the regions now handicapped for lack of sound rail infrastructure.

Higher provisions have been made in the Railway Plan for next year for both rolling stock acquisition and gauge conversion (Rs 1180 crores and Rs 555 crores respectively) while track renewals and electrification programmes are maintained at current levels. There is a reduction in provision for new lines as also for doubling of tracks. The targets for track renewals and electrification have been scaled down though the Railways hope to renew over 2300 kms of track in 1992-93 and ensure that the backlog in renewals is covered, especially on the high-density routes, by the end of the Eighth Plan.

The pace of electrification also seems to have slowed down from 83[illegible] route kilometres in 1990-91 to 675 kms in the current year and to 500 kms, the target set for 1992-93. This does not accord with the objective of energy conservation and reducing dependence on petroleum-based energy referred to by the Railway Minister.

The increases in Railway fares and freight have been Rs 622 crores in 1988-89, Rs 876 crores in 1989-90, Rs 892 crores in 1990-91, Rs 584 crores (for less than eight months of 1991-92 or about Rs 950 crores in a full year) and Rs 1366 crores in the Budget for 1992-93.

These increases are becoming harsher and do not seem to have any impact on bringing down what are regarded as social costs, that is, rendering certain services below cost. As long as these subsidies remain intact, it helps the Railways to go on "rationalising" the tariffs without being accountable for efficiency and productivity. The Railway Minister may head off criticism with fare concession for which he has enough cushion in his hefty package. ■

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NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY
Signature of Publisher

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GOVINDACHARYA: Swadeshi Movement

(Continued from page 6)

capita income crossed Rs 2500 from Rs 1127 in terms of the 1980-81 prices.

But all along our development model has been alien. The path was not suited for our needs and conditions. But we adopted it. We expected that by inviting multinationals we would be benefited in four ways—we would speed up capital inflow, technology would be upgraded, unemployment situations would be eased and we would get substantial foreign exchange earning through exports and that would improve the balance of payments position.

But what have we achieved today? The outdated technology of the West and dirty industries have been dumped in our country. Due to wrong policies the MNCs have not been involved in those sectors which were needed by us. But Pepsi Cola entered the consumer goods sector. Pepsi had promised 50,000 jobs for the youth in Punjab; they have provided nearly 500.

In this total perspective of our economic situation, perspective if one looks at the *swadeshi jagaran abhiyan*, it can be concluded that it is not merely a campaign to hinder the sales of MNC-produced goods. Nor is it a battle between foreign and Indian capitalists. This campaign overtly is centred around educating the people to use goods manufactured in India by Indians. It is a campaign with a non-partisan approach. It is not a party programme.

The appeal is for voluntary simplicity and simplicity. The *swadeshi jagaran abhiyan*'s wider aspects are: (a) Are we ready to understand and appreciate Indian conditions and needs and forsake the distortions created by the glamour and glitter of the prosperous West? (b) Are we sensitive to the fact that India's prosperity is not confined to merely 170 million people but to the whole 85 crores? (c) Are we ready to learn from the mistakes of the past? Are we ready to understand that the resilience and stamina of our economy have rested with the traditional sector and not with the modern industrial sector?

The debate will lead to a change in the mode of production, ownership rights, our values and approach to life itself. One can rest assured that the organisers of the *swadeshi* movement are quite aware of these dimensions and also confident about what they want to achieve. The battle has to be fought at the level of *swarajya* and not *surajya* alone. ■

CHANDRA SHEKHAR: Political Economy

(Continued from page 5)

Dunkel Proposals: Prescriptions for Disaster for the Third World

The external pressure seems to be succeeding on another front too. There is no doubt that the Dunkel proposals are aimed at legitimising the dominance of the West over the developing world. Indications are that the government is going to ignore the reasons forwarded by different sections opposing India accepting the Dunkel proposals as they feel that "the criticisms arise either because of lack of understanding of the voluminous and complex document or because of preconceived notions".

If so, this would be the singlemost disservice the government would be doing not only to future generations but also to the Third World movement as such. One shudders to think of a future when the farmer would be bonded to the MNCs and when the factory employee would be nothing but a robot following a set pattern.

The government has no moral right to accept these proposals without a public debate. The issue should be debated in the Budget session of Parliament.

Agricultural Production

The Indian economy is facing the prospect of a severe recession starting from the current year 1991-92. Industrial production is showing zero growth. Agricultural production during the last three years is reported to have fallen; during the current kharif the decline expected is of the order of five to six million tonnes and one is not sure whether the rabi crops will make it up. Most likely the agricultural growth will also be zero this year and this will be in a situation when the food prices have been soaring and the government stocks have depleted. The overall growth rate of the economy in the current year may not be even one to two per cent. What is even more alarming is that there are no immediate prospects to lift the economy out of this situation in the next and the following years. We have had the fortune of having four good monsoons in a row after 1987-88. If the next year happens to be a bad monsoon year, the situation may turn into a disaster.

In the agricultural revolution in India three components have played a major role; one is the increased water availability for irrigation alongwith energisation of irrigation systems and the second is availability of fertilisers. The third, that is, the high yielding varieties of seeds respond much more to these two inputs. Given the limited land resources and large and growing population, we have no option but to keep on increasing our land productivity through intensive application of inputs if we want to remain self-sufficient in food supplies.

Giving up the objective of self-sufficiency in food has its own implications in the global political matrix. The withdrawal of subsidy for fertilisers in the last Budget has raised fertiliser prices and it is bound to affect use of fertilisers by small and marginal farmers who do not produce for the market and, therefore, do not stand to get compensated by rise in procurement prices. If they do not find fertiliser application within their means they will opt for other crops or low yielding varieties and thus the production will fall. Any further rise in fertiliser prices will severely affect the prospects of agricultural production and will come in the way of the objective of food security and self-sufficiency.

The Threat of Wheat Imports

The government has recently announced that it is going to import wheat. This imported wheat is likely to reach the Indian shores only when Indian farmers would be selling their wheat in the market. It appears that imports have been designed to depress the prices of wheat for the Indian farmers. The government is willing to pay the American farmers about Rs 5 per kg for wheat but wants to pay the Indian farmers only Rs 2.25. If the government succeeded in this design then in the next year farmers would not be producing enough of wheat and consequently more imports will become necessary and once again we would be at the mercy of foreign governments even to feed this nation.

When the proposal for importing wheat was initiated in the government, the price of wheat was being quoted at $110 per tonne. By the time the government took the decision, the prices had touched 180 dollars. Those who have assured the government that they would arrange country specific concession of 40 dollars per tonne, have ensured that this poor nation pays through its nose another 40 dollars over the price at which the original proposal of the government was based. We should not forget that any concession we get from any other nation has to be paid in one form or other.

Soaring Prices and the Common Man

The price situation is alarming. Inflation is already running at about 13 per cent annually. But what is even more alarming is that the foodgrain prices have increased by 28 per cent during the corresponding period. Prices of cereals and coarse grain have risen even faster than the others. The implication is obvious. The poor, the unorganised, whose consumption largely consists of cereals and such other items, will bear the largest burden of inflation. Their purchasing power will be squeezed much more than the purchasing power of those in whose consumption food has a small share. Food constitutes 75 to 80 per cent of the consumption basket of the poor while it is only 35 to 40 per cent of the consumption basket of the rich.

As the data thrown up by the consumption surveys reveal, the per capita consumption of cereals has remained stagnant for quite sometime and this in spite of the fact that the growth in cereal production has been more than the growth in population. This phenomenon is attributable to the adverse impact of inflation whereby the consumption of the poor declines, but the direct consumption of the rich does not increase because they are already consuming at a level which need not increase. If there is a decline in the production of foodgrains or the growth in production is slower than the growth in population, combined with the high rate of inflation and much higher increases in the prices of foodgrains, the consumption of the poor will decline. This will negate all the gains of the alleviation of poverty. The nutritional status of the population will go down and poverty will increase.

Grave Implications of Globalisation: The Case of Farmers and Weavers

How the globalisation and liberalisation of the economy would affect the farmers of this country who through their hard labour have made us self-sufficient in food and have saved us from the shame of carrying the begging bowl, becomes clear even when we consider one input crucial to this sector. The prices of urea in the world market, even in our absence in the world market, are ruling above $ 170 per tonne. The landed cost of this fertiliser to farmers in Punjab and UP without any subsidy or loss to a public sector corporation would be above Rs 6000 per tonne. The farmers who have yet not recovered from an increase of 30 per cent in the prices of fertilisers effected by the government only a couple of months back, would then be required to pay double the price than what they are paying today. How many small farmers, marginal farmers and farmers who mainly produce for self-consumption would be able to afford to buy fertilisers at prices above Rs 6000 per tonne?

It would, therefore, be logical to believe that if that happens, about 60 per cent of the Indian farmers would not be able to afford to apply fertilisers to their crops, which in turn would lower their output. As a consequence those poor farmers who in the last 20 years have been able to improve their lot from the position of eating 'once a day' to 'twice a day' would revert back to the same position at which they were on the eve of independence.

There are reports that handloom weavers in some areas have committed suicide because they could not afford to buy the hank yarn at the current level of prices of yarn prevailing in the country. This has happened when cotton prices from which the hank yarn is produced are ruling 10 to 20 per cent lower than those in the world market. During the current season the world cotton market is ruling easy due to high production in some countries, indicating that the world market prices of cotton in a normal year are going to be much higher. If the Indian economy gets globalised, prices of cotton would have to prevail at the same level as in the world market. As a consequence, hank yarn prices would further increase and as a result many more weavers would face ruination and their children will suffer starvation.

Even the common man working on a reasonable salary either in the organised or unorganised sector would be crushed under the price-spiral that is bound to take place in the Indian economy as a consequence of globalisation The wheat in the world market right now is being quoted at $ 180 per tonne. Adding to it the cost of transport and handling, etc. from American ports to the wheat eating belt in India would imply a retail price of above Rs. 7.50 per kg. How many low income consumers would be able to afford this level of price?

In the case of rice also prices are likely to get doubled from their abnormally high levels currently ruling in the Indian markets. Even at the current prices a large number of families are unable to get two square meals a day; when the price would get doubled widespread starvation may become a common phenomena.

We are facing difficult times. The problems are complicated. The pressures are enormous. There are no easy solutions. Hard decisions are to be taken. We need firm resolve to pool our resources. We have to introduce austerity in our spending. It should emanate from the top. Government spending has to be curtailed. Unproductive expenditure has to be stopped We have to depend upon the willing cooperation of our people. They can be inspired by the example set by the more privileged people. Let us be clear in our mind that we cannot call upon the poor to make sacrifices for the promised brighter future without corresponding changes in the behaviour of the rich. 'Liberalisation' to the rich provides an opportunity to the chosen few to enjoy the best that is available in the world without providing for the basic needs of our people. Mere assurances cannot enthuse them to cooperate. How can we think of a better future without the help of willing people?

We will have to arouse their faith in future. Their self-confidence will have to be preserved and strengthened. Our farmers will have to be given better facilities to produce more. Workers are to be inspired to contribute in meeting the challenges of today. This cannot be achieved by making them idle but by putting them to work. Only a few months back we were talking in terms of 'right to work'. Now we are aiming to give them 'freedom' to fend for themselves. This will not work. They cannot remain passive spectators of their own ruination. The possible unrest among the unemployed youth may become unmanageable.

We can tide over the crisis by uniting our people for a determined action With their will-power and capacity to create wealth we can manage our affairs. Hard work is possible only if our people are assured that they will be given opportunity to live a life of dignity. If by our utterances and actions we compromise with the dignity of the nation, then how can we inspire them to make sacrifices? The spirit of *swadeshi* and self-reliance has to be resurrected. If in the dark days of our history it could do the miracle, why cannot it work today?

If we need help from others, others also seek our cooperation. It is mutual. A nation of India's size and potentiality cannot be ignored unless and until we surrender the spirit to resist.

This spirit of resistance is to be inculcated in all sections of our people. Let us work together in that direction. No compromise with national honour. No surrender to outside manipulation and pressurisation. No curtailment of our decision-making powers. Let us depend upon our own. Let the people be aroused to preserve our national pride. The rest will follow. ■

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POLITICAL NOTEBOOK

Time for Initiative

Now that the Beant Singh Government has taken office in Punjab and democracy stands restored in the trouble-torn State, the long-awaited political initiative to settle the Punjab problem does not brook the slightest delay. Despite the fact that barely 25 per cent of the electorate exercised their franchise in the Punjab elections, the turnout of voters being the lowest ever, and although the poll took place under the shadow of the gun (reflected not only in the terrorists' depredations but also in the massive mobilisation of the armed forces to ensure peaceful polling), there is now an air of expectancy in the State Both the Central and the State Governments have a major task to convince the Punjab populace that they are really serious in resolving all the outstanding issues facing the State This is precisely where the Narasimha Rao dispensantion has to strike a radical departure from past practice.

In his customary address to the joint sitting of both the Houses of Parliament on the opening day of the Budget session, President R Venkataraman began the speech by dwelling on the Centre's policy on Punjab While congratulating the "brave people of Punjab" for the "courage they have displayed in reaffirming their faith in the democratic process and in the abiding values of secularism and nationhood", he declared "The Government is committed to finding a just and amicable solution to all the outstanding issues in Punjab. The Rajiv-Longowal Accord was a step in this direction The presence of elected representatives will strengthen a meaningful dialogue and the participation in the process of all sections in the State "

These words are of weighty significance indicating a new course dictated by the ground reality and the exigencies of the present-day global environment No doubt the Prime Minister, while reiterating this commitment for a dialogue, has in a recent interview underscored that any solution in Punjab has to be within the framework of the country's unity and integrity. But this does not reflect any fundamental shift from the tenor of the President's address

Meanwhile, the Punjab Chief Minister has called upon the Akali leadership to eschew the path of confrontation and cooperate with his government in tackling the basic issues confronting the State This is definitely welcome But neither can the Akali leaders respond nor can there be any appreciable decline in the sense of fear among the Punjab populace unless tangible steps are taken on the lines indicated in the President's address Narasimha Rao is on record having publicly assured, before the elections, that the Centre would adopt the necessary measures once a popular government was elected in the State. It is now time for him to keep that promise without undue delay.

Several noted personalities, including the widely respected Communist stalwart Satyapal Dang, have spelt out the outlines of a political package for Punjab The element of terror still stalking the countryside being quite obvious in the latest aborted bid on Beant Singh's life, any reluctance on the part of the Centre to unfold the package would be a costly error and could invite the same disaster that overtook its predecessors to the detriment of the nation's overall interest

March 4 *S.C.*

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Magna Carta of Marketisation

KAMAL NAYAN KABRA

The Indian economy is passing through an extraordinary phase, based only marginally on the inner logic of the economy. Many years of utter mismanagement seems to have brought us to the present impasse characterised by one, the abject surrender to the entrenched centres of economic and political power at home; and two, the pathetic nervousness in the choice of a self-defeating relationship with the external forces, particularly with the core group fo global economic and military powers.

The balance of payments and inflationary crises are, in a considerable measure, due to the continuous adoption of soft options which restricted and worsened the future possibilities. Some of the recent developments in the political, economic and ideological spheres on the national and international planes combined with one another to create an adverse conjuncture for the current budgetary exercise.

I

THE analysis of the prevailing economic situation in the Economic Survey 1991-92 represents an attempt to divert attention from these basic factors. The attempt seems to be to impose a package of measures jointly hammered out by the indigenous and external interests by exaggerating the crisis points and misrepresenting the character of the crisis. The internationally infamous features of the structural adjustment package and their detailed and time-bound specification for India by the Fund-Bank have also robbed their economic justification of its scientific validity and the budgetary exercises of much of their 'romance of secrecy and anticipation'. The additional factor is the consternation caused by the more than willing submission to these machinations by the present regime claiming to be the successor of those which had guided the NAM and ardently advocated the New International Economic Order.

The Economic Survey 1991-92 seems to be an attempt to reveal as little of the harsh economic reality as possible. Many of its statistical tables concerning macro-economic variables are just a literal reproduction of what the preceding Survey contained. There is no analysis of the trends in savings and investment. Symbolic of the neglect and downgrading of the employment objective is the mysterious stoppage of the data of employment in the organised sector at March 1989. Since the data on agricultural and industrial production are reported, one wonders why the hesitation to present the updated data on the GDP and related aggregates.

The statement regarding the "fairly robust growth rate of 5 to 6 per cent in the output of services" in 1991-92 and the data on the performance of the infrastructure make it all the more curious that the GDP figure is not given. Does it have something to do with preventing a close scrutiny of the claim of reducing the fiscal deficit to a pre-stipulated proportion of the GDP? With the Fund-Bank monitoring of dozens of macro-economic variables on a quarterly basis, ostensibly for ensuring repayment of their loans, one wonders why the country is not being taken into confidence on these crucial facts.

Some apparent double-speak in the Survey also causes concern. At one place, the Survey says:

> There has ensued an industrial recession in which *industrial investment* has slowed down (p 23, emphasis added)

Earlier one reads

> The response to the new industrial policy has been very encouraging The number of *investment approvals* given in 1991 has risen to 5538 from 3335 in 1990 3897 *investment proposals* were cleared between the announcement of the new policy on 24 July, 199. and 31 January, 1992 (pp 13-14, emphasis added)

◆

THE authorities take considerable solace from the "marked improvement in foreign exchange reserves" (amounting to Rs 11,410 crores). Exports in dollar terms were lower by five per cent during April-November 1991. However, imports declined over

The author, a noted economist, is a Professor at the Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi the same period by 20.7 per cent. The trade balance deficit became lower. During the fiscal year 1991-92, Rs 3212 crores worth of drawals were made from the IMF. Commercial credits worth Rs 1559 crores were approved during the first half of 1991-92. Something like Rs 6000 crores in foreign exchange was collected by means of amnesty and India Bond schemes, bringing the known external borrowing during this period to Rs 10,771 crores (and some foreign exchange was in the kitty at the beginning of the current fiscal year). As the authorities too claim, they re-established the capacity to borrow by some policy changes to rebuild the confidence of the lenders. A crisis which erupted, *inter alia*, owing to reckless borrowing, without ensuring that each loan creates by its use the capacity to survice it and repay it, is sought to be set right by a replay of the similar borrowing binge. A poor farmer who contracts fresh loans to repay past debts is treated as worse than a defaulter: he mortgages his future as well. But our economic pundits and responsible political leaders consider it an achievement to be able to resume borrowing: the more the merrier.

The Survey goes on to say almost as much:

> **additional resources mobilised from the multilateral financial institutions and the IDB and Immunity Schemes were primary used for building up reserves and not to liberalise imports. (p. 16)**

The resolve not to liberalise imports, however, was shortlived and from the second half of the fiscal year, import relaxation was introduced. The reason seems to be that the import squeeze was counted among the factors for industrial slowdown and the slow growth of exports. The Survey gives data on annual rates of change in industrial production and non-oil imports (both moving negatively) for the first eight months of 1991-92. Simply by placing the data on two diagrams (see diagrams I and II) one can easily see that there is little correlation between the two.

Fig I

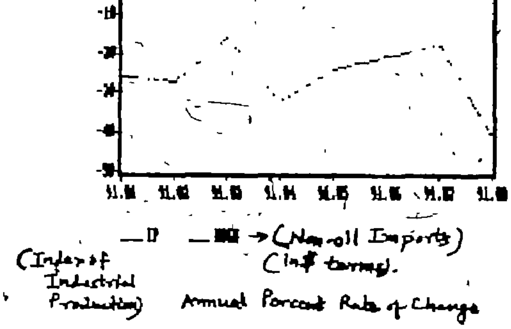
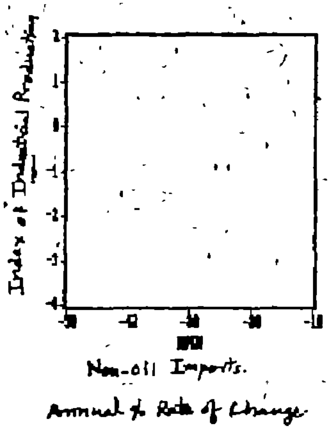


Fig- II.



One has to probe deeper. A large number of investment approvals could not prevent the recessionary trends. Import compression too could not have been a major influence. Among better probables one may mention a sharp reduction in Plan and non-Plan public spending on capital account of the order of Rs 4575 crores.

Then, the excessive concentration of the manufacturing sector's growth in some elitist industries based on imported inputs in the 1980s may indicate a narrow and uncertain demand base, particularly after the saturation of the demand suppressed in the past. The buoyancy in black earnings and absence of any worthwhile tax draft on the high income groups indicate the weakness of any postulate of demand deficiency. The general spread of recession, except for beverages, tobacco and cement (although more worked in capital goods, exports and consumer goods industries) also point to same basic, structural factors, particularly because there was no slump in agricultural incomes either.

High interest rates; attraction of imported/smuggled substitutes; the growing demand for farm houses, holidays, artistic goods, various services; absence of price advantage for domestically produced luxury goods, partly owing to the operation of cost-push factors, etc. may have something to do with the slowing down of the leading industries of the 1980s. The Survey seems to oversimplify and misread the nature of the dynamics of industrial slowdown as also of its obverse, that is, the dynamics of industrial growth, particularly insofar as it continues to neglect labour-intensity, widening of the home market and the role of the informal sector. The market forces as they stand today cannot take care of these concerns.

Actually, the phenomenon of recession should have been viewed alongwith that of persistent inflation. A combination of lower fiscal deficit, smaller additions to the money supply and hefty increases in administered prices, mainly of universal intermediates, are considered adequate in the official perception for containing inflation. It is this perspective which makes the anti-inflationary thrust of the Budget strategy weak and incredible in almost every quarter. The Survey seems to ignore that the food prices are the major contributor to the current inflation. It also under-reports the growth of inflation. The index number of the wholesale prices went up by 18.5 points upto December 1991 and the food price index by 39 points, compared to 18.9 points and 30 points respectively in the preceding year.

The Survey is tight-lipped regarding the nature of our economic problems: the challenges we face and the adequacy of our policy responses and our institutional arrangements. It hardly sees anything beyond the BoP problems and inflation, giving the impression as though our external sector is the most critical one.

II

THE impact of this perspective and the underlying reasoning is writ large over the Budget for 1992-93. The Budget seems to have been taken as the major occasion for putting into place the new economic order the authorities have come to treat as the panacea.

It takes big strides on the road to marketisation, privatisation, globalisation, as well as the rolling back of the state, planning, public sector and inward-looking, people-centred self-reliance. It discards the figleaf of equity and social justice. Even the rhetoric on those lines is missing. What it says is, as the concluding para of Part I of the Survey puts it:

> *The Government has tried to expand the economic space in which people can exercise their initiative and ingenuity. It hopes to do more to expand their opportunities, to enhance their potential. But what shape the economy takes ultimately depends on what the people make of it. In that sense the future is in their hands. (emphasis added)*

Except for the use of the word 'people' in a special sense, meaning those who are players in the non-level field of the market and excluding those millions of poor, resourceless Indians who fail to enter the market, the statement neatly sums up what the Budget 1992-93 has done and what one should expect from it. The minority of Indians who are players in the market field have more space, more opportunities, fewer rules and a very considerate umpire. And yet, it warns, the government has done its bit.

> **We are travelling through difficult and uncharted terrain, where no action is without attendant risks, and success will not always be immediate.**

Thus, the future is in the hands of the people meanign the market operators, for whom the space and opportunities have been increased. But since the market is cruel, ruthless, uncertain and unsparing, the warning shot has been fired right with the word go.

Let us see what the Budget has done. It more or less completes the agenda of 'liberalisation'—liberalisation in an illiberal environment both at home and abroad. After all the progress we have made during the last four decades or so, our per capita output remains about two per cent of the super-rich, post-industrial nations. Our percapita daily final consumption is about one-third of a US dollar. With this initial position we are embarking on the path of globalisation for integration with the super-rich of the spaceship Earth, with the market and private, concentrated private, enterprises as the terrain and the players respectively and with the IMF and the World Bank as the umpires.

◆

LIKE a pale and halting imitation of the "Comprehensive Measures for Economic Stabilisation" announced in 1979 in South Korea, we can regard the present Budget as the magna carta of marketisation-privatisation-opening up. The liberalisation of the industrial trade, financial and foreign capital policies have been or are being completed. After a substantial restriction of the role of the public sector to mere eight activities, sizeable disinvestment in the PSUs, the entire infrastructure field has been opened up for the Indian and expatriate capital. They can raise capital from any nook and corner of the world—they are welcome and shall attract a lower tax of just 10 per cent. They can import capital goods, technology and raw materials (except for those on a small negative list to be announced) at substantially lower tariff. A financially beleagured exchequer has agreed to sacrifice over Rs 2000 crores in import duties. They do not have to beseech the RBI for foreign exchange: just go to the market and buy it. The market will determine the pattern of demand, give signals, spell out the relative profitabilities and allocate resources. We are to live according to the model set forth in Samuelson's Economics.

Huge incomes will be earned, capital gains made and wealth accumulated in this process. But one need not fear the tax chaps eager to reduce the sacks of 'hard-earned' moneybags into tiny pouches. The Budget propoosals amount to imposing negative income taxes on certain sections. Hence the market-friendly Budget will leave the enterprising with larger disposable incomes.

But would not the spectre of wealth tax scare them? Would not the high market values of the assets remain unrealised because realisation through sale would invite the capital gains tax? The fiscal experts appointed for reforming and simplifying the tax system suggested the remedies; the Fund-Bank threw its weight behind for their acceptance (of course without having so much as an inkling of what the expert committee's views are: you don't have to know the report if you know the guys who write them) and the finance minister (small initial letters deliberately chosen) willingly accepts them. Thus one may put tens of thousands of crores of rupees into 'productive' financial assets without having to pay any wealth tax. The threshold for wealth tax has been raised three times from the present level to Rs 15 lakhs. Since only about one lakh assessees declare wealth above Rs 10 lakhs, the new provisions imply that the wealth tax is practically abolished. The super-rich could not have a more friendly regime: the taxes which even the Western market economies impose are either non-existent or teethless in India. The abolishers of estate duty have no moral right to shed tears now that the game is furthered by their successors.

The capital gains are indexed and hence, substantially reduced. You cannot index the earnings of the poor workers facing real threats of loss of jobs, as exit or reorganisation of capital is already liberalised and more is on the way. But the gains of the 'enterprise' must be protected! Even in indirect taxes, the across the board increase of five per cent special excise, the luxury and white goods are exempted (partly by invoking the recommendations of a Marxist Chief Minister!). The real reason, of course, is to bail out those high-growth, high-tech industries from the ravages of the market forces. Naturally, a market-friendly approach has to guard against itself as well.

The external orientation of the system has been increased in many ways: more, large and growing areas for their operation; easy entry-easy exit; availability of financial instruments, lower tariff, retention of 15 per cent export earnings in foreign exchange and another 45 per cent at 'market rates'. Those MNCs which act as export houses and earn foreign exchange by exporting the produce of the artisans, small industrialists, farmers, horticulturists, etc. will have a large amount of their 'own' foreign exchange for financing imports. But their Indian, home market-oriented competitors will have to obtain imported technology, capital goods, raw materials, etc. by means of market-priced foreign exchange. The partiality of the partial convertibility has to unfold itself fully at the marketplace to enable one to realise the differential impact it would have. But its great profitability to the MNCs and their Indian affiliates is obvious. A Budget which increases the excise burden on Indian industry by almost as much amount as it reduces the burden of import duties certainly shows its colours: it improves the market access in India of the foreign capital.

◆

A related question is that of legalisation of gold imports at a duty of Rs 450 per ten grams. It is certainly true that an economic order which accelerates the growth of large accounted and unaccounted income and wealth, institutionalises inflation, encourages consumerism and puts a lot of value on conspicuous consumption, cannot contain the practically insatiable demand for gold. Given the price difference between the Indian and world prices of gold (of about Rs 1100 per 10 grams presently), a lot of gold is likely to flow into the country, benefitting to an extent Indians and people of Indian origin living abroad, particularly those few having the means to buy five kilograms of gold. It would provide some foreign exchange to the public exchequer as well. The 'partial convertibility' and gold imports are expected to reduce the *hawala* business. But much would depend on the large and flourishing tribe of gold-smugglers.

Are the gold-smugglers, with large resources, useful connections and extensive networks, going to go out of busineess? It would be naive to expect that they will look for new pastures and give up having anything to do with gold. What they may lose by way of reduced price differential, may be made good by the reduced cost of bringing gold into India, with the incredible 'advantage' of moving out from the underworld to the open, respectable

(Continued on page 33)

US Pressure on India's Nuclear Policy

JAGDISH R. HIREMATH

Nobody need be surprised that the public debate on India's nuclear options for the nineties has hotted up in recent weeks. Meanwhile, a steady stream of gentle persuadors from Washington has been descending on New Delhi, apparently not so much to read us the Riot Act, as to guide us on to the so-called path of reasonable response in the present nuclear age. In quick succession South Block has been host to a number of distinguished visitors—Reginald Bartholomew, the Under Secretary of State for International Security; Senator Larry Pressler of Pakistan's much hated Pressler Amendment; and Ronald Lehman, the Director of the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency.

Not to be left out of this hectic exercise was the British Foreign Secretary, Douglas Hurd. And when Madhavsinh Solanki stopped over in Tokyo on his way back from the UN Security Council Summit, his Japanese counterpart, Michio Watanabe, did not miss the opportunity to urge India to sign the NPT, even hinting that Japanese aid may be denied to countries with nuclear weapons or selling conventional ones.

More recently, the outgoing US Ambassador, William Clark Jr, has thought it fit to concede that India need not sign the NPT. It would be quite adequate, it seems, if we were instead to evolve "a workable nuclear non-proliferation regime". It is difficult to decipher the difference in the end-result of these two alternative approaches. But it is significant that the envoy goes on to make a distinction between non-proliferation and the elimination of nuclear weapons which, according to him, would require a different set of measures and a very different time-frame.

Clark was apparently doing no more than dutifully repeating, in his own words, what had been said not so long ago by Ms Teresita Schaeffer, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs, namely, that the focus of US policy was "to encourage and develop a regional understanding on nuclear non-proliferation". Even Congressman Stephen Solarz, our consistent champion on Capitol Hill, is reported to have said at a recent Washington seminar on the "The Changing Face of Asia" that India should participate in the proposed Five Nations Conference on Nuclear Non-Proliferation in South Asia in order to terminate the potential threat that we face from China and Pakistan.

The author, a distinguished diplomat, was India's representative to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) between 1985-1989.

It would be evident from this brief chronicle of the immediate past that a well-orchestrated campaign has been launched to wear out our persistent refusal to change our nuclear policy, which has aimed at the total elimination of nuclear weapons from this planet and not merely to slap a peremptory embargo on their horizontal proliferation. It has been a policy that has found eloquent expression in recent years in the global appeals to halt the nuclear arms race that two successive Indian Prime Ministers issued, alongwith several world leaders, in 1984 and 1985, and which assumed its most concrete form in the "Three Stage Action Plan for General and Complete Disarmament" that Rajiv Gandhi presented to the Third Special Session of the UN General Assembly in June 1988.

In spite of the relentless efforts made by the US and its friends to persuade us to change track, South Block has gone out of its way on more than one occasion to state that we are not under pressure to sign the NPT. Of course, that is true in a strictly formalistic sense. But it must be recognised that the "other options" advocated by the NPT adherents would have the same disastrous effect of perpetuating the nuclear monopoly of the five weapons states identified and recognised in that treaty. It is also true, at least on the basis of publicly available information, that there has been no overt armtwisting to turn our steps to the desired direction. This contrasts vividly with what the redoubtable Ms Carla Hills has been holding out, with her armoury of Super 301 measures, to make us accept the US demands on trade, patents

(Continued on page 34)

Dunkel Text: An Assessment

DEEPAK NAYYAR

The author, a former Economic Advisor to the Finance Ministry, is presently a Professor in the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. This article is a revised text of the author's oral presentation, made on January 23, 1992, to the Cabinet Sub-Committee collecting different viewpoints on Arthur Dunkel's Draft of the Final Act on the Uruguay Round of GATT Negotiations.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Director General of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, Arthur Dunkel, has presented the Draft of the Final Act on the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations. This document represents the outcome of a process of negotiations that began more than five years ago, following the Ministerial Declaration on the Uruguay Round at Punta del Este in September 1986. Thus, the Dunkel Text is neither an intellectual construct nor received wisdom. It reflects the bargaining strengths or weaknesses of groups of countries at different levels of development and the dynamics of the negotiations over time. This has been tempered, to a limited extent, by the multipolar nature of the contemporary world economy, in particular the conflict on agriculture between the United States and the European Community.

It is essential for us in India to make a careful assessment of the document, which has far-reaching implications and consequences for developing countries, in terms of our national interests. The object of my presentation on this subject is to highlight the strategic issues rather than to provide a systematic, let alone complete, discussion of the complex problems. To begin with, I shall situate the Dunkel Text in the wider context of the political economy of the Uruguay Round. Then, I shall provide an assessment of the outcome embodied in the Dunkel Text, with reference to our expectations. Thereafter, I shall elaborate on a few selected issues where the proposals in the Dunkel Text are a cause for serious concern. In conclusion, I shall attempt to make some suggestions in terms of the options available to us at this juncture.

II. THE WIDER CONTEXT

IT is necessary but not sufficient to recognise why and how the Uruguay Round is different from the earlier rounds of multilateral trade negotiations. The differences are much wider and deeper than its enlarged scope. The Uruguay Round is an ambitious and complex endeavour at many levels so that it is possible to miss the wood for the trees. In my judgement, an overall perspective is essential because the whole of the Uruguay Round is much greater than the sum total of its parts. Outside the limelight, in a setting of business as usual, the Uruguay Round is *de facto* engaged in defining the parameters and writing the rules for international economic relations between countries at very different levels of development. It is a new international regime in the making that extends beyond the movement of goods across national boundaries to international flows of services, capital, technology, information and personnel. This is the outcome of a planned strategy and orchestrated tactics adopted by the major industrialised countries. The object of the exercise is to put together, piece by piece in a jigsaw, the structure of a new system with corresponding rules of the game, in conformity with the perception and the interests of the industrialised countries in the world economy.

The political economy of the Uruguay Round is easier to discern in the context of the new issues when juxtaposed with the moves for institutional reforms and change. GATT type rules and principles, with provision for dispute settlement, compensation and relation, are sought to be extended to international trade in services, international investment flows and international transactions in technology. It is an altogether different world from the traditional concerns of the GATT relating to border restrictions on trade in goods. The quest for international regimes of discipline on trade in services, trade-related investment measures and trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights is closely intertwined with the interests of the transnational corporations, which are capital-exporters and technology-leaders in the world economy and for whom the new issues represent the final frontier intheir global reach. The organisation of production, trade and distribution on a world scale requires the unfettered movement of not only goods but also services, capital, technology, and information across national boundaries. From the viewpoint of transnational corporations, it is preferable that these rights are incorporated in multilateral frameworks, which give them legal rights, instead of bilateral concessions they would have to obtain through negotiations with national governments. It is plausible to suggest that the Uruguay Round represents a systematic endeavour on the part of the United States and the major industrialised countries to re-design the rules and the parameters which govern the functioning of the world economy, in part to suit the interests of transnational corporations for whom distinctions between goods and services, trade and investment, or technology and information, are of no more than academic interest.

The thrust of the Uruguay Round, as embodied in the Dunkel Text, extends far beyond the border paradigm of the GATT. The traditional concerns of the GATT were limited to international trade in goods. Countries negotiated market access at the border on a reciprocal basis and this was multilateralised through the GATT system. The international trading system now proposed extends beyond goods to services, technology, investment, and information. The result would be that market access in the industrialised countries, for goods exported by developing countries, which was guaranteed on a non-discriminatory basis (for sectors other than textiles and agriculture) under the GATT system, would now be conditional on the concessions that developing countries would be required to make in their intra-border economic regimes relating to investment, technology and services. Insofar as this would imply a transgression of sovereign economic space, it constitutes a fundamental departure from the GATT regime.

III. EXPECTATIONS AND OUTCOME

IT is worth recalling that in the discussions which led upto Punta del Este, where the Uruguay Round was launched, the developing countries were by no means enthusiastic. Indeed, in the realm of the new issues, it would be no exaggeration to state that the developing countries were most reluctant. Yet, once the Uruguay Round became a reality, the developing countries in general, and India in particular, did have a perception about their objectives in the negotiations and expectations about the outcome. At this stage, when we evaluate the Dunkel Text, it is necessary to outline the objectives and make an assessment of the outcome in relation to expectations.

In my judgement, India had three sets of interests in the Uruguay Round. First, there were the positive interests, such as the dismantling of the MFA and the provision for labour mobility in an agreement on trade in services, where we sought to capture some gains. Second, there were the protective interests, such as the preservation of Article XVIII B and the maintenance, if not strengthening, of Part IV of the GATT, where we sought to maintain the status quo. Third, there were the negative interests, such as those associated with trade related intellectual property rights and trade related investment measures, where we sought to limit the damage arising out of the proposal for new regimes. Last but not least, there was agriculture, not quite an old issue and no quite a new issue, where our interests were mixed and in parts unclear. It would be reasonable to ask: how does the Dunkel Text measure up to these expectations?

In the sphere of textiles, the dismantling of the MFA and a return to the GATT remains a distant promise. Indeed, there shall be no discernible gain in the form of increased market access, for seven years in the transition period of a decade. In substantive terms, liberalisation of international trade in textiles would begin only after the onset of the twentyfirst century. This cannot be construed as a concession to the developing countries, even if we ignore the history of the past three decades which witnessed extensions of the MFA, in duration and scope, time after time.

In the proposed General Agreement on Trade in Services, there is nothing on labour mobility, which would allow us to exploit our comparative advantage in services. The movement of labour from developing countries to deliver services in the markets of industrialised countries is a matter for bilateral;

sector by sector, negotiations. Given the immigration laws and the consular practices in the industrialised countries, the pobability of success is almost negligible. In sharp contast, the draft mutilateral framework for trade in services caters to the interests of the industrialised countries, which have a revealed comparative advantage in capital-intensive or technology-intensive services, even if this implies changes in the investment laws or technology policies of the developing countries.

Apropos the rules of the international trading system embodied in the GATT, Article XVIII B remains but has been diluted in comparison with the present situation, insofar as the provisions for notification and justification are far more stringent. As for Part IV of the GATT, which commended rather than mandated special and differential treatment for the developing countries, it stands abandoned. In the Dunkel Text there is a special povision only for the least developed countries, so that other developing countries, such as India, which are the contracting parties of the GATT, have been subjected to instant, *en bloc,* graduation.

It is clear that the Dunkel Text belies our expectations insofar as we have neither managed to effectively promote our interests in textiles and services nor managed to adequately preserve our interests in the rules of the GATT system. It is not possible to elaborate further on these matters here. However, the outcome in the spheres of trade related intellectual property rights and agriculture provides cause for serious concern. These two issues deserve both recognition and emphasis, because technology is strategic in the process of industrialisation and agriculture remains a source of livelihood for the majority of our people.

The uniform regime for the protection of intellectual property rights, proposed in the Dunkel Text, would mean important departures from the intellectual property rights system in India, particularly the patents law, which must be explicitly recognised. Exclusions from patentability would be confined simply to animals and animal varieties and plant and plant varieties. It would no longer be possible to limit patentability to processes alone which would statutorily extend to products. The burden of proof would be reversed. Importation would be deemed as the equivalent of working a patent. Compulsory licensing would be possible only under a very restrictive set of conditions, while automatic licences of right would disappear. The period of protection for patents would be extended to twenty years. It need hardly be stressed that the extent of these changes would necessitate amendments across-the-board in the Patents Act.

The implications of this proposed regime, for the absorption, diffusion and adaptation of technologies, let alone innovation, in the developing countries, are far-reaching. Much needed technologies may no longer be available at affordable costs. The emergence of domestic technological capacities may be pre-empted. Transfer of technology may slow down. The incidence of restrictive business practices by transnational corporations may increase. The prices of some patented products may rise beyond the reach of the majority of people. These are just some of the important implications and consequences, which suggest that the emerging international system for the protection of intellectual property rights is bound to be inequitable and inimical from the perspective of the developing countries.

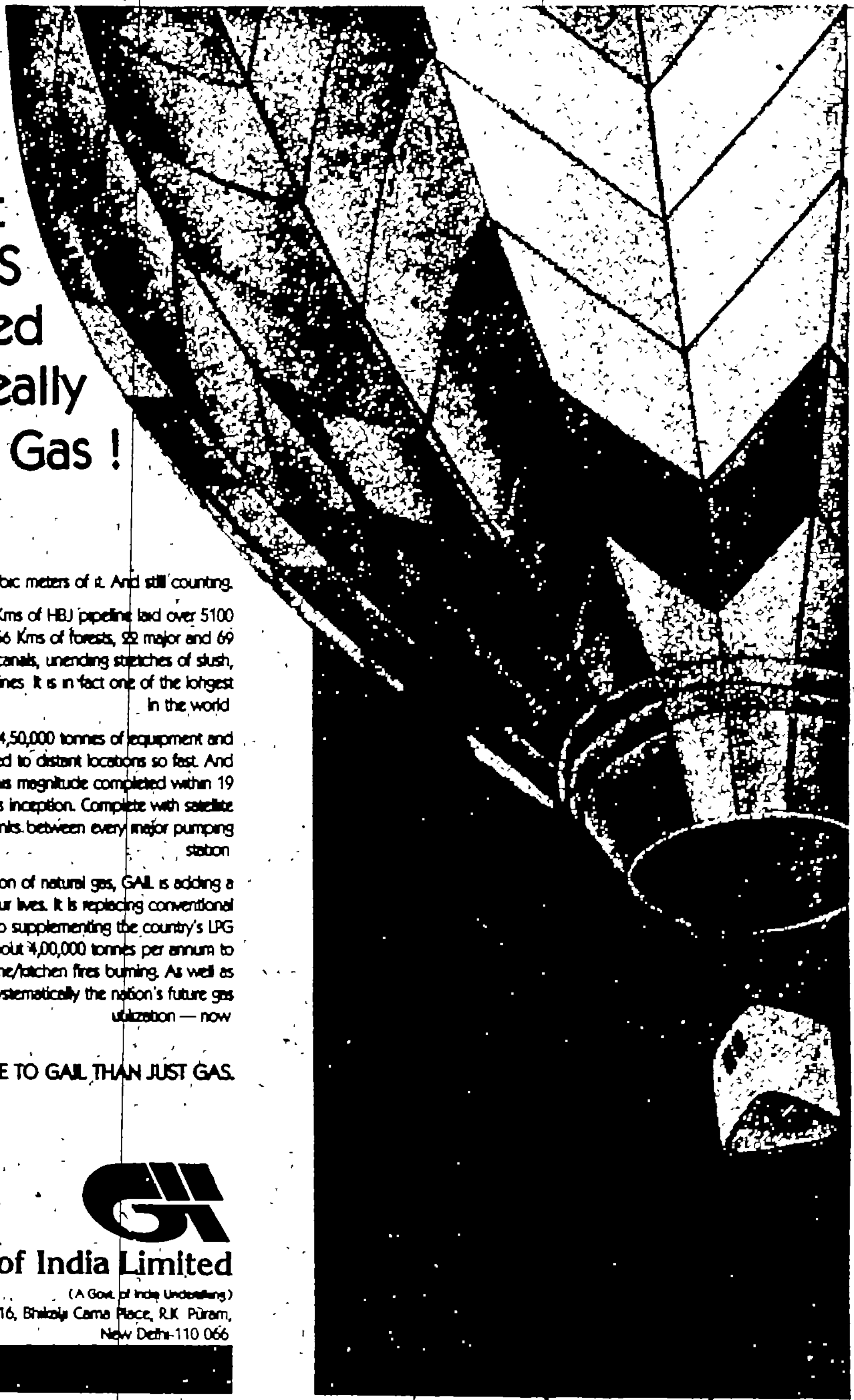
The proposed régime for trade in agriculture, outlined in the Dunkel Text, should also be a cause for concern to us in India. This is so for three reasons.

First, the stipulations about *market access*, which will obviously impose binding constraints on trade policy, are worrisome. For one, market access can be restricted only for balance of payments considerations and not for protection to domestic agriculture; what is more, such restrictions on imports must be price-based alone, so that quantitative limits on, or canalisation of, imports, whether cereals or edible oils, would no longer be possible. For another, we would have to provide a minimum commitment on market access, which would be determined by our actual imports of particular agricultural products, say wheat, during a specified period in the 1980s. In the sphere of export promotion also it would no longer be possible to reimburse losses on, or canalise exports from, the agricultural sector, as we have done with sugar and wheat from time to time in the past.

Second, the limits on *domestic support* for agriculture, that can be provided by the government, will clearly circumscribe our freedom. While there is provision for a food security system, our public stock of foodgrains would be deemed as too large and our procurement system would become the subject of GATT discipline. There would be an absolute limit of 10 per cent of the value of production, for each crop, beyond which domestic support would not be permissible.

Third, it is clearly specified that *subsidies* on

(Continued on page 28)



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Narcotic Aggression and Operation Counter-Attack

V.R. KRISHNA IYER

The drug abuse is no longer considered a 'victimless' crime; it is a crime that imposes a staggering burden on the people and the nations of the world. It is a burden no society can afford to carry.

The illicit production, distribution and consumption of drugs have intimidated and corrupted public servants, and have even destabilised governments. The erratic ebb and flow and sheer volume of 'drug money' have affected the money supply and exchange markets.

Religion is the opium of the people, wrote Marx. But today, opium is the religion of the people; and, like God, is omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient. Alas, opium makes you slowly ill and eventually kills, makes you a new criminal to rob and buy the stuff, tempts you to smuggle at risk to become rich quick, makes you invisible trafficker of psychotropic stuff and operator of a parallel international illicit currency and sub rosa evangelist of mafia culture. Drug business makes you, if not killed betimes, the possessor of pleasure, power and empire. What noxious menace is this most pervasive vice that benumbs the soul of student, teacher, doctor, politician, artiste and professional, and corrupts innocent millions of youth and promising intellectuals everywhere!

Illicit money-laundering on an international scale is another felonious facility offered by drug trafficking. Terrorists thrive through drug trafficking; so too the underworld of crime and violence. This global scenario, in its sombre macabre, devouring delinquency, is dominated by drug abuse and narcotic trade. These secret operations are now so ubiquitous that you and I, our children and brethren are all unsuspecting victims through processes so subtle, techniques so seductive and prospects so alluring that the world community is now confronted by a cosmic enemy—this insidious narcotic and psychotropic drug problem. Our planetary patriotism or commitment to human survival compel us, wherever we are, whatever be our other differences, to line up for the campaign against homo narcoticus and the all-powerful drug imperialism. No single country, ruler, party or power can conquer the pathological fascination for psychotropic substances under various disguises; and so, a worldwide movement—militant, compassionate, multi-pronged and soulfully committed to the salvation of our generation from the dreadful addiction to drug—is the desperate desideratum.

India, *all Indians*, one-sixth of humanity, must organise the holy battle, harnessing every resource, governmental and NGO, to redeem our tryst with mankind's drug-free destiny. The proletariat and the proprietariat, the agriculturist and the industrial community, the lawyer and the doctor, the academia and the intellectual, the spearheads of all spiritual and religious denominations, why, the slum-dwellers and the rootless rural nomads must all form a pan-Indian United Front to fight this evil empire at all traffic points, in the fields and in the streets, in the hills where poppies cannabis grow and wherever the menace of marijuana shows up.

We are constitutionally bound to this massive undertaking. Whatever your party, to be humanist takes priority over politics. The war against narcotics is a world war and anti-drug justice is a critical dimension of social justice. We must be on the side of the Allies and against the producers, traffickers, terrorist smugglers and criminals of sex and violence and corrupters of the cream of youth and talent.

◆

THE Indian Constitution mandates the state, in Article 47, to protect public health and to endeavour to prohibit the consumption of drugs which are injurious to health. Pursuant thereto, the Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 has been passed. Moreover, India is a party to international instruments calculated to wipe out drug abuse. The Government of India has ratified the 1988 UN Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. It has further signed a US-India bilateral agreement on anti-narcotic cooperation. India is also a party to the 1961 United Nations Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, the 1972 UN Protocol amending the Single Convention, and the 1971 UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances.

Law is what law does, and according to the

International Narcotic Control Strategy Report (March 1991), published by the United States Bureau, the status of enforcement in India is poor. Unlicenced cultivation in the Himalayas and the Western Ghats, among other areas, is good agricultural business still. The Government of India destroyed only 24 hectares of illicitly grown opium in 1990 compared to 99 hectares in 1989. In Kerala *ganja* cultivation in Idukki is prosperous business, and the crop destruction has not been effective enough. The present Kerala Minister, Viswanathan, is reportedly enthusiastic in 'Operation *ganja* destruction'. However, there are vested interests, political and others, which frustrate the Viswanathan agenda. The will and might of the whole government, with full-blooded participation by a crusading public, can be the only locomotive which will wipe out *ganja* from our hill regions.

'Operation *ganja* extermination' reportedly makes headway in the Kerala forestlands, fertile and irrigated but diverted for these contra-legal but super-profitable crops. It is informative to know the facts:

> Some nine lakh *ganja* plants on 1300 hectares of forest land in Idukki and Palakkad districts were destroyed during the 80-day long operation from October 11 to January 1. Based on the price of a kilogram of *ganja* in the local market which is around Rs 1500, the destroyed plants are worth around Rs 120 crores. But in terms of the price in Tamil Nadu markets which ranges between Rs 3000 and Rs 5000 a kilogram it could be worth Rs 250 crores to Rs 300 crores.
>
> Some one lakh plants were destroyed in 350 hectares of land in Ponnamala, Kalkadu, Chunipara areas; 1.8 lakh plants in 200 hectares in Ashokavanam, Kailasam and Mayadi areas; 20,000 plants in 200 hectares in Thottikadu and Padunakodi areas, another 20,000 plants in four hectares in Kozhikanam and Vallakadavu areas; one lakh plants in 100 hectares in the Shoolappara area; and two lakh plants in 100 hectares of land in the Kanjappara, Manakodi and Thottikadu areas. One lakh plants were destroyed in the Mangala Devi temple area on the Kerala-Tamil Nadu border. (*The Hindu*, January 6, 1992)

Even so, the macro-scale of cultivation and the miniscule elimination of the noxious crops argues for a more intensive nationwide campaign associating social action groups, journalists, mobile courts and medical-cum-habilitative cadres.

◆

EVEN heroin seizures show a lagging trend. From 2.2 metric tonnes in 1990 which is less than 1989 and opium seizures of 2.1 metric tonnes down from last year, a slackening of the pace is seen. Of course, there is a Cabinet-level Working Group on Narcotics, headed by the Home Minister, but funds are flimsy and performance a failure. Two or three Ministries (Home, Welfare and Finance) are too many cooks indeed!

The staff for narcotic control is inadequate, the funds insufficient, the Narcotic Control Bureau's monitoring ineffective and the drug trafficking network growing. The courts are overburdened with dockets; and so, unless special narcotics courts are started, no progress will occur in control. States ask for Central funds to set up new courts, and funds from the Centre are not forthcoming. So, arrestees are few and they are on bail because of long delays in trial or languish in jail for years.

The truth is that legal vigour is wanting in every sphere, be it in customs, or mail, prosecution or de-addiction and rehabilitation. Stockpiles are escalating, the drug business is booming, addicts are rapidly rising; crime, with a role for narcotics, is galloping and courts for conviction or centres for correction are meagre. We do not have even reliable statistics to formulate programmes of action; and anti-narcotic enforcement is making headway steadily *backwards*. Statutes sleep; officers drowse and the police need to be policed. Action is theatrical and symbolic; the recruits to narcotic numbers are leaping and the country's moral resistance is surrendering to the psychotropic mafia. 'The petty done, the undone vast' is the tragic tale of defeat writ large.

The drug trade makes India a transit camp and within the country drug abuse is establishing its disastrous empire with none to challenge its formidable hold on the unwary youth and stress-torn adults. *The drug world is one* and we can win only if the international community will mobilise its total resources for resistance and strengthen its commitment and cooperation in launching a global attack on this near-invincible invasion.

Governments cannot achieve success through officialdom alone; laws cannot eradicate the evil through courts only; the hydra-headed narcotic monster may surreptitiously slip into every home, and *once in*, is difficult to drive out. So new strategies are needed; people's awareness and mobilisation are a must; NGOs must multiply and the treacherous trade tracked down. More, many more curative centres, control officers, specialised courts and habilitation facilities must be organised. The nation will perish if society is apathetic. The National Convention held in Cochin did focus on the terrible problem and brought it into the open for public discussion. Everyone with concern must participate, even religious and spiritual leaders, if we are to overpower the drug terror. The National Convention with the Ministers' rhetoric and officers' oral strategies are ineffectual. The people must awake; the youth must arise. An energetic coalition against narcotics must take power.

A Concluding Note

Even intellectuals like Aldous Huxley have experimented with drugs which alter states of consciousness. Chemical persuasion easily proves addictive and eventually ends fatally. The attraction for *soma* juice comes from Vedic times. However blissful to begin with, such chemical potions have lethal consequences. The classical tranquilliser is opium. But opium is a dangerous drug and its last stage is always a tragedy, causing illness, crime, domestic unhappiness, moral degradation and avoidable accidents. Cocaine is a very powerful and a very dangerous drug. Aldous Huxley states:

> Those who make use of it must pay for their ecstasies, their sense of unlimited physical and mental power, by spells of agonising depression, by such horrible physical symptoms as the sensation of being infested by myriads of crawling insects, and by paranoid delusions that may lead to crimes of violence. Another stimulant of more recent vintage is amphetamine, better known under its trade name of Benzedrine. Amphetamine works very effectively but works if abused at the expense of mental and physical health.

Hashish, *bhang*, and marijuana are popular addictions. Cannabis is also harmful. LSD, it is said, transports people into the other world sometimes never to return. These health-corrosive stimulants make the consumer a prisoner. Depression deepens into despair, in turn into terrible mania. Unfortunately, modern life is so stressful that people seek drugs to make life tolerable.

Tranquillising, hallucinating and mental conditioning are helpful to dictators who can manipulate populations into subservience through the extensive pushing of drugs; and there are many in the pharmacopoeia of versatile narcotics. Through poisoning, the mind is rubberised and enslaved so that the creativity of the nation itself dies a natural death.

In short, the campaign against narcotics is also a battle for moral values and mental freedom; the war against drug abuse is a crusade for human dignity and integrity of personality. Democracy for a doped people is an illusion and so, extirpation of drug abuse is a struggle for human rights.

Do or Die

De Quincey, who was an addict but a literary favourite of the generation of students in the thirties, praised the pleasures of opium: "Thou hast the keys of Paradise,/Oh, just, subtle, and mighty opium!" This is the fatal fascination of the younger generation which seeks to make trips to the unholy heaven from whose bourn few travellers return. Everlasting farewells! and again, and yet again, every lasting farewell may be the lot of most drug addicts. ■

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Policy Changes: For Whom and Why?

D.P. BHATIA

During the fifties and the sixties, it was felt that in the Indian villages a poor farmer or a landless labourer is often in the grips of the village *sahukaar* (moneylender). Once he borrows, it becomes difficult for him to get rid of the yoke of the *sahukaar*. Now it appears that India as a whole is in the grip of the international *sahukaar*. This inference is drawn from the terms being dictated for lending the money, which have no direct relevance to improving India's foreign exchange reserves. The policy prescriptions are irrational and unrelated to the economic sickness of India. These constitute a kind of ideological invasion.

When the present government took over, India was facing a problem of forex crunch. How this problem arose—due to the ill-performance of the external sector or excessive external borrowing—is an issue secondary to the question as to how the disease is to be cured. Of the two alternatives, to borrow or to tighten the belt, the present government went for the former. It appears that taking advantage of this, the moneylender started dictating terms, and these vary from decontrol and privatisation of the economy to reduction in the fiscal deficit and freeing the entry of the MNCs. The conditionalities also amount to slashing down of the wage cost and reducing the bargaining power of the labour class. In order of priority the question needing our immediate attention is whether the prescription provided will help in curing the specific economic disease.

II

LET us take the question of privatisation.

The past performance of large units in the private sector, public sector units and small units reveal that most of the export requirements are met either by the public sector units or by the small units. The large private units have not shown sufficient interest in raising India's exports. During the eighties, the percentage share of the large private units in India's total exports declined from 60-65 to 40-45. Thus, based on past performance, it appears that with increasing privatisation the export drive will fail to receive the desired momentum. There are further reasons to believe this.

Under market conditions the private sector will go by the profitability criterion. The simple economic law teaches that profitability is positively related to relative price changes. Given this, with almost creeping price rise, if not stagnant or declining in the international market, and the fast-rising domestic prices are likely to divert sales from exports to the domestic market. Further, as controls are withdrawn, the trader will be free to sell wherever he likes, the domestic or the international market. He will prefer the domestic market over exports.

Another prescription relates to reducing the fiscal deficit. The fiscal deficit comprises of budgetary deficit and market borrowing: the former is regarded as responsible for increasing the money supply and consequently price rise, and the latter leads to diversion of resources, perhaps from more productive to lesser/unproductive uses. Therefore, it is understandable that the fiscal deficit needs to be kept under control. However, the course suggested by the IMF and adopted for achieving this objective—which is indiscriminately raising the prices of basic goods, capital goods, essential consumer goods, etc.—is difficult to digest. This course is more damaging than helping the economy. There exist alternatives and these could have been explored.

First, there is ample scope for cementing the leakage of direct taxes. The self-employed class, specially those in the services sector, like trading, professionals, pay very little tax on their income. In case the self-employed in the service sector are made to pay their income tax in full the revenue generated will wipe out a good percentage of the current deficit.

Then, the maximum income-tax rate was lowered in 1984-85 and 1985-86 expecting that people will pay their income tax honestly. Unfortunately, this has failed to work. The income tax revenue has not shown any response to the lowering of the rates. If that is the outcome then why to continue with this trend? Not only because different sections of the society have benefited unequally from the past progress, justice requires proportional sacrifice at this hour of crisis and therefore there is a scope for raising the tax rate at the higher income slabs. The present drive of equal sacrifice in the form of higher prices, is totally devoid of the principle of social justice.

Similarly, there is a substantial leakage of indirect taxes, and this also needs cementing. Ironically, an honest tax payer keeps on paying the tax and one who invades from time to time gets a change to convert black into white income. In less than a decade's time, it is the fourth time that a chance has been given for declaring the black income. This demoralises an honest tax payer.

In short, in order to bring down the fiscal deficit, it would have been better to rely upon raising the revenue for which ample scope exists rather than reducing expenditures and raising the prices. Cutting on government expenditures adversely affects demand which in turn suppresses production leading to unemployment, and so on. One needs to remember that the great depression of the early thirties which gave birth to J.M. Keynes' General Theory was caused by demand recession.

The present course of price management has led to a steep price rise of the essential consumer goods. This in turn has already adversely affected the demand for manufactured goods, specially automobiles and electricals, and it will be legitimate to think of a recession. If timely steps are not taken which, however, mean reversing the recent policy changes, the socio-economic conditions may take an ugly turn.

III

THE question of efficiency which is being emphasised needs a careful consideration. Here only two of its aspects are considered.

In the first instance, one fails to understand how far it will be useful if labour efficiency is raised by rendering a significant percentage of employees as surplus and adding to the unemployed force. An issue that could have been debated before such drastic policy changes is whether, given the present level of unemployment/under-employment in India, it is possible to mobilise sufficient quantity of capital and achieve full employment or a stage close to full employment at a capital-labour ratio which results in an efficiency level which is near about what is found in the industrialised economies. If that is not possible, then what are we heading towards?

Another dimension relates to the relative price formation. Over a period the prices of the public sector products increased at a much lower rate than those of the private sector. In case these prices were allowed to be determined by the market forces, the profitability in the public sector would have been much higher and even more than that in the private sector. One should, however, also be aware of the price attached in determining the prices of basic and essential goods by the market forces. India would have experienced a galloping inflation because rising population and investments for development would have kept demand far ahead of supply.

IV

BEFORE concluding it is necessary to analyse the growth and price aspects of the IMF prescription. In the past decade India's GDP grew annually at five to six per cent, industrial production at about eight per cent and prices rose at eight per cent. The performance for the past few months ending December 1991 reveals a negative industrial growth. The GDP in 1990-91 may rise by less than three per cent, the WPI at 13-14 per cent and the consumer price index at 16-17 per cent. Further expectations are that in 1992-93 the GDP may rise by three to four per cent. Thus the policy changes will scale-down India's past achievement at least over the next couple of years.

It is also feared that with the policies being pursued, India may soon face a shortage of real domestic saving. Already small savings have started fettering. In India, about 60-70 per cent of savings are generated by the household sector. With the present trend of rising prices of essential consumer goods, the real income of this sector will decline leading to a fall in savings. Thus the present price trend is expected to adversely affect the household savings and consequently domestic saving which will further compel India to seek aid. The Finance Minister has already revealed that "India will require IMF and World Bank aid till 1993-94". Perhaps it will be unwise to predict beyond that.

V

IN case, as is implied in the foregoing analysis, the

(Continued on page 30)

Evolving Strategies for Tribal Development

NITA MATHUR

In recent years the main meeting ground of planners, administrators and social scientists has been the subject of development. The air around conference rooms remains laden with words like 'development', 'upliftment', 'progress', 'welfare', 'growth', 'modernisation' and 'social change'. The enthusiasts belonging to diverse academic, social and political streams actively engage themselves in discussions that involve raising eye-brows, thumping tables and hurling criticism at each other. Groups separated in the realm of ideas converge, however, on themes advocating upliftment of certain sections of society at a micro-level and that of the nation at large. They agree that development is crucial to nation-building and nation strengthening. In this crucible of ideological unity divergent viewpoints melt away.

India has been idealised as a country of rapid economic expansion and sustained economic growth, as one in which material and technological depressions have been ironed out thus preparing the ground for a stable and self-reliant economy. The imbalanced and lopsided situation that confronts those engaged in development activities is a product of the colonial past in which the resources of the country were depleted to suit the vested interests of the rulers. This deepened intrinsic cleavages in the power structure and control over the means of production, distribution and consumption within a group and between socio-cultural groups in the wider context. Development in India warrants wearing strands at different educational, perceptual, technological and economic levels to constitute the mainstream in which "the notion of segregation is not held, and a group is united with the other transcending individual, cultural and ideational differences." (Srivastava, 1989; pp. 16-17)

The government envisages speeding up the pace of tribal development so as to bring them at par with the non-tribal groups. Bridging the gulf of levels of development calls for innovating methods for increasing the tribals' income, making them self-reliant and encouraging them to participate in new productive processes and developmental tasks. This may be achieved by eliminating the exploitative practices on the tribals and fostering processes of socio-economic development, rendering justice and infusing strength and courage among them. An average tribal working as a labourer must be saved from the clutches of economic and social exploitation and from such policies as land alienation, marketing, and excise and forest policies which have been found to strike roots as developmental plans are introduced in regions of high tribal density (*Guidelines for Tribal Sub-Plan,* 1978).

The scope of development programmes is often restricted to the economic aspect of life. The Indian Government approaches the target of economic development and poverty amelioration through the technique of planning that ensures the optimisation of limited resources. The areas enlisted by the government (*The Planning Process,* 1975; pp. 56-57) as most appropriate for drawing up local plans are the following:

(i) agriculture, including minor irrigation, soil conservation, village forests, animal husbandry, dairying, etc.;
(ii) development of cooperatives;
(iii) village industries;
(iv) elementary education, specially provision of school buildings for local communities;
(v) rural water supply and the programme of minimum rural amenities, including construction of approach roads linking each village to the nearest road or rail head; and
(vi) work programmes for the fuller utilisation of manpower resources in rural areas.

The government assiduously prepares plans, appraises progress and restructures its policies. Developmental plans, policies and strategies are intended to touch upon the daily life of the masses, and in particular those sections of society that have hitherto remained neglected and have undergone or are undergoing economic turmoil and hardship resulting in their alienation from the national mainstream. Among others, the government schedules certain castes and tribes as proposed beneficiaries or target groups of welfare programmes. Funds are allocated, schemes are launched and other incentives like reservvation in jobs are

The author belongs to the Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi.

extended. The government machinery is geared to particularly benefit the Scheduled Tribes apparently distanced from the national centre due to socio-economic, cultural and cognitive reasons.

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A large number of tribal development programmes are intended to generate income and employment opportunities. Operationalisation of these plans and policies involves granting loans at low interest, providing productive assets and input to families, training youth for self-employment, creating durable community assets and educating the tribals so that they are integrated with their contemporaries in other parts of the country. A group of appointed officers enter a tribal area with a rigid format of tables. Their task entails collecting statistics and completing lists indicating the number of beneficiaries, loans sanctioned and so on. They sift out emic accounts bearing on involution of the social fabric in the high sounding schemes. The ethnocentric disposition of officers distances the tribal folk who sometimes develop mixed attitudes to ambivalence and hostility toward them (Chaudhury, 1990a). To the lobby of anthropologists this appears as alienating and dispassionate in character.

There is a hiatus between government agencies actively involved in formulating and implementing plans on the one end, and the tribals as the proposed beneficiary group on the other. Policy-makers remain ignorant of the social milieu in which a tribe is rooted and which profoundly influences the understanding of the external world, experiences, value system and conceptualisation of its members. It is imperative to examine the cultural paraphernalia before laying out plans and programmes for the tribals. Inclusion of relevant anthropological data will serve to resolve the crises that arise out of apparent rigidity in the social structure and non-economic constraints that limit technological advance.

The Anthropological perspective on development places emphasis upon acquisition of knowledge about the cultural setting of a tribe as a pre-requisite of planning. Highlighting the interplay of culture with development plans, Dube (1988) makes the following propositions:

1. The ubiquity of culture is coupled with its local and regional variations.
2. All development programmes should take cognisance of cultural diversity.
3. In case this diversity is not attended to or when programmes are devised with experiences drawn from other cultures, or when models of development are detached from the cultural reality of a society, there is a breakdown of every effort that tries to ameliorate the society-naturistic and revivalistic movements occur; the developments are seen with animosity.
4. Culture is dynamic, but does not imply that it is easily transformed. Even when changes occur rather rapidly the local culture is able to hold itself. It is in the context of culture that people find the meaning of life and existence. Thus, what is it that people look for when the development plan does not suit them? They look for their culture which gives them sustenance and existence.
5. Hence, there must be a plurality of the development programmes—we cannot think in terms of a common programme for all. But we have to think in terms of different programmes for different contexts, each paying allegiance to the local cultural contexts. It is in the multiplicity of the development programmes that we see the real meaning of anthropological work. Such a plurality of development programmes is important in the Indian situation because, as we said earlier, of its diversity and plurality. Although much of the experimentation of development was done in the Third World countries, all this failed primarily because the socio-cultural factors were ignored in them. (Chaudhury, 1990b; pp. 13-15)

The policies should be planned, keeping in sight the socio-cultural milieu of the tribals for whom they are intended. There is no global tribal culture; hence the monolothic, unitary schemes of development for the entire tribal population of the country have met with only partial success. The impetus to accept and incorporate a development programme is not solely dependent upon its scale, scope and advertisement but more importantly on its degree of integration with the culture of the people it is supposed to benefit. According to Roy Burman (1968), the value system trickles in the community response to developmental programmes and is found to play a critical role in determining the broad strategy of the programme (that is, if it is given due consideration). Further, specific items of a programme are highly influenced by the corpus of related beliefs and practices, and finally, a combination of strategy and tactics produce the mid-range influence which is crucial to planning. In essence, social and cultural traditions infiltrate the processes and patterns of development.

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A development plan which is ill-aligned with cultural practices and beliefs is most likely to be rejected as demonstrated by Chaudhury (1990b). Critical assessment of planned development among the Kondhs of Orissa by the trained anthropologist revealed that the Kondhs were supplied cattle as a part of the government programme. The people obtained a rich quantity of milk which did not fetch the market within the tribal group primarily because the Kondhs do not consume milk as part of their cultural tradition.

The only alternative was to direct the supply of milk toward exchange with other tribal groups. The difficulty in this operation is that milk is a perishable commodity and the Kondh must be educated about preservatives that will enhance its shelflife, for, after all, it may take time to transport milk from the area of production to that of distribution and exchange that is just enough to spoil it. At this juncture Chaudhury raises a pertinent question: Should the tribals who do not consume milk be given milk producing cattle? If introduction of pastoralism was essential, then the material provision should have been accompanied with technical knowledge regarding maintenance of cattle, preservation of milk in addition to a battery of incentives to initiate and sustain the change. Chaudhury opines that in the absence of an immediately accessible market and proper encouragement there is a strong possibility that the change is resisted.

By the same token, Roy Burman (1968) cites a case from the Rabha tribe to whom the government alloted commodious houses. The tribals refused to take possession of the houses because of a belief that their ancestral spirits would resent the new construction and it was not feasible to abandon them for this. The settlement was used to house cattle and poultry birds. The housing programme did not line with the cultural tradition and failed miserably.

In another case, the Tota community (occupying the village, Totopara, situated at the border of West Bengal and Bhutan) practicing orange cultivation was faced with a serious problem that threatened their survival. The orange grooves dried up yielding a meagre harvest. The Agriculture Department sought to uplift the stage by experimenting with varieties of chemicals and fertilisers applied to different trees. The experimental details indicating the names of specific growth-inducing substances were recorded on yellow tin plates attached to the trees. One day Roy Burman found that the plates had been removed by the people. Interrogation disclosed that the action was prompted by instruction from Ispha (their deity) who expressed that the trees were turning yellow because of the colour of tin plates. It was a case of sympathetic magic. Roy Burman (1968) immediately turned the logic parallel by suggesting the replacement of yellow tin plates with green ones, for trees may turn green due to the magical effect of green plates. This was readily agreed to and the people's cooperation with the Agriculture Department renewed.

It is important to promote an ideology in which development and change are seen as part of socio-cultural tradition rather than as antagonistic to it. In the words of Joshi and Srivastava (1989; p. 109):

> If changes in material appurtenances and ideological infrastructure are to be successfully initiated, it is imperative that continuity is maintained with the traditional aspects of society. And, thus, religion, rather than being declared as obnoxious, needs to be re-interpreted to suit the secular premises of social living. What is being reinforced is not religion *per se*, but the sanctioning mechanisms that underlie the whole corpus of myths, beliefs and practices.

Development, to most people, has come to mean digression from all that is traditional—technology, customs and vocations. The tribals, much like the backward castes, are encouraged to aspire for absorption and employment in the public sector.

In a similar context, Das and Kagal (1990; p. 2) maintain, "what such creative communities need is not a few token seats in dingy, central offices to work as peons, clerks and even IAS officers, but opportunities to develop their crafts, institutions in which their pedagogic practices would provide models for teaching and policies that would not destroy them in the name of modernisation". They should not be mercilessly dragged out of their natal socio-cultural setting to be transplanted in an environment for assimilation in which they strain to adapt. Development will be effective if they are provided benefits that profilerate on their cultural substratium and for which they are not compelled to seek new ground.

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EVEN after more than four decades of concerted efforts and systematic planning, the tribal people are not one with the mainstream of the Indian population; we are still engaged in drawing up new plans for their education and development. The process is not complete and the fulfilment of the goal appears afar. These trends are symptomatic of the fundamental errors in the process of formulation, implementation and evaluation of plans that arise out of gross neglection of tribal cultures *per se*. An aspect of tribal culture, often neglected and uncared for, relates to their thought process that tremendously influences their understanding, expectations, aspirations and behaviour. This as a vital component of culture deserves larger attention than has been sanctioned for it. The following pages are devoted to integrating the tribal perception and cognition with their development.

Each people have a unique social heritage, distinctive way of life, ideals, values and behaviour. More importantly, tribal societies differ in their systems of perceiving the environment, classifying it and thinking about it. This involves probing the explicit dimension of performance and behaviour in order to arrive at the psychological processes in which they are lodged and from where they germinate. Planners should take tribal cognition (defined as, "those processes by which man acquires, transforms, and uses information about the world", Cole and Scribner, 1974; p. 2) into consideration if educational and vocational training delivered as part of plan implementation is to be made intelligible to them.

Olson (1970) maintains that various forms of activity require different perceptual information, and that the children elaborate their perceptual world (make new and different discriminations) as they master new activities. For example, creeping around a room or walking across a field, require information based primarily on topological cues, whereas building a wooden crate requires information based on geometrical features. (Cole and Scribner, 1974; p. 95) The cognitive world of a tribal population contains identifiable, culturally meaningful stimuli which may be appropriately used; for example, a tribe which recognises form and colour as the means for classifying may contain a rich potential for successful botanists and not navigators. In this situation it would be less rewarding or even futile to initiate the people into the field of geography or oceanography.

Cole, Gay, Glick and Sharp (1971) and Cole (1978) described a case from the Kpelle tribe of Africa. The tribal children failed to understand school mathematics. It was felt that analyses of their indigenous mathematical knowledge might provide clues to learning difficulties. They inaugurated the inquiry with a battery of pragmatic questions: What kinds of things do tribal people court measure? What kind of geometrical knowledge is exhibited in such activities as building a house? How does mathematics enter into everyday activities like rice farming, going to the market, dividing food among members of a family? The team of researches discovered that the students could not distinguish between a triangle and circle due to acute perceptual problems. They were, however, adept at measuring rice (a task in which they engaged often) and had highly differentiated vocabulary for commonplace, mundane activity.

In this circumstantial condition it is cardinal to guage the problem, isolate basal causes and forward remedial proceedings. It would be advantageous to emphasise those subjects that interest and are better understood than the others. Further, it has been found that native informants fail to recognise the contents of photographs, even when the pictures are taken in the informant's locale and even if the pictures are of the informant or members of his family (Cole and Scribner, 1974; p. 64).

Various cues that we take for granted require some degree of experience in and exposure to culture that encourages response to those particular cues or subaudition. Thus, in a tribal school when the students are taught the alphabets, for example, the teach says "A for Apple" and shows the picture of an apple; there are reasons to doubt that the students do not recognise the picture at all even though they may have munched the fruit only a few minutes before the class. Understanding will be enhanced if education is imparted through ethnic procedures—incorporating rice counting methods in this case. After the preliminary training the scope and horizon of the traditional methods and subject knowledge should be expanded and brought at par with the universal ones. We should avoid imposing an external classificatory system on a group since it is not easily included in organising and experiencing the sensory environment.

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THE human mind is not dichotomised into the 'tribal' and the 'non-tribal'. It is culture that bills certain capacities and potentialities here and activates certain others there to chisel what appear to be diversified mental structures. Stages in the cognitive development of the tribals should be identified. This may lead to significant conclusions; for example, an eight year old tribal child may be similar in mental age and cognitive capacity (for Western education) to a six year old non-tribal child or even vice versa. This implies that similarity in chronological age is an unreliable index of mental capacities. It would be severe injustice to overlook such vital differences and pass judgements on their intelligence.

The application of intelligence tests developed in urban contexts to the tribal people placed in different cultural contexts leads to fallacious results. The tribal people score low. The figures are interpreted as manifesting their poor intelligence and implicitly reinforce ethnocentric ideas that place them at an inferior position relative to the non-tribals.

Inadequate performance at a task does by no means necessarily uncover incapacity; rather, it demands a thorough search of exact obstacles and lower or eliminate them through well-planned strategies. It is important to understand what learning experiences influence a person's acquisition of a particular cognitive strategy, or his decision that it is appropriate in a particular situation. This reformulated question is crucial for the psychologists' understanding of thoughts and cognition; it cannot be answered adequately without careful consideration of the culture in which a person lives and the environment in which his previous learning experiences occurred." (Miller, 1971; p. viii) These aspects of educational psychology have long remained ignored though perhaps herein lie the antecedents of tribal lag that retard their inclusion in the central fold.

Training and orientation programmes extended to the tribals should not be divorced from their culture and conceptual processes. According to Doob (1961) and Cole, Gay, Glick and Sharp (1971) traditionally oriented people adhere to the belief in "one correct way" of accomplishing a task and less inclined to see alternative solutions to problems much in contrast to acculturated people who are relatively less susceptible to dogmatism and exhibit remarkable proficiency in abstract thinking and describing their feelings and reaction to environment.

The Angami Naga tribal religion (called Nanyu) revolves around the concepts of spirits, hell (*terchocha*), and heaven (*tegei*) and sin (*kephuma*). The followers of this religion, however, fail to explain these abstract constructions. The harvest of responses gathered after sessions of in-depth interviews barely consisted of simple statements that diagnosed *terchocha* and *tegei* as division parallel to desirable and undesirable respectively. (Mathur, 1990) If this be true of other tribal societies then it is evident that tasks requiring abstract thinking and expressing shall be performed poorly. It should be borne in mind that tribal policies do not make demands for abstract thinking and that if this be inevitable, the tribals should be so oriented and trained, prior to assigning tasks that call for this capacity.

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IT has been found that in most tribal societies learning is by observation. This carries implications for discharge of technical knowledge with regard to introduced machinery, instruments, implements and contrivances. Cole and Scribner (1974; p. 177) advance two hypotheses in this context:

> **First, we might expect to find that people who have a lot of practice in learning by observation will be good at it. They will learn quickly if given the chance to learn by observing. Second, these same people ought to experience special difficulties if they are asked to teach or learn something when the teachers and students are not engaged in a common, ongoing activity.**

The speculations were substantiated in intensive fieldwork among the Angani Naga tribe (see Majumdar, 1986; Mathur, 1986).

Cultures differ in the exploitation of sense modalities. While one culture, for instance, utilises visual capacity, the other stresses dance and rhythm. Tribal children and adults of the two groups employ different sense modalities to acquire and process information about their environment. Thus, while one trains its members in visual sensitivity and literacy the other trains its members in proprioceptivity. The physical and technological environment in which a people are nourished upon which they subsist coerces a definitive array of sense modalities, perceptual and cognitive patterns. The cognation between ecology, economy and cognition has inspired research that seeks to unveil the linkages.

Reviewing a large number of such researches Palsson (1988) furrows through the model clustering hunters, gatherers and fishermen as nomadic food gatherers. He maintained that aquatic hunter-gatherers differ from terrestrial food gatherers. Marine hunting-gathering imposes cognitive demands significantly different from terrestrial resources. Fishermen not only improvise cognitive maps to locate fishing spots and reach there; they must also generate descriptive models of an environment about which information may be obtained from indirect observation. Such cognitive and technological aspects provide grounds for variation in administrative approaches. Cognitively divergent groups should not be accommodated under a single cover. Cognitive divergence percolates in ethno-psychology, cultural goals, beliefs and practices. The development programmes should be in their tune if they are to be appreciated by the people.

The question—"how do tribals think and learn?"—cannot be dropped as redundant and subaltern.

Their cultural context and thought processes are momentous to their logic, attitudes and behaviour that make for dissension or assimilation of plans and policies. Tribal thinking may be derived from their language, everyday situations, rites, rituals and games. There are, however, other standardised psychological methods and techniques as the free association (in which the informant is supplied a series of words and required to respond to each word with the first word that comes to mind), the similarity-distribution technique (in which the informant is verbally provided a set of items one at time and asked to make a sentence employing each word) and the free-recall experimental procedures (see Coler, Gay, Glick and Sharp, 1971 for details for these and some other methods).

Administrators should take cognisance of tribal aspirations, and their understanding of and expectations from development programmes. The programmes should be experimented with in order to determine their repercussions on the social framework which is expected to shelter them. They should be launched at a small scale or trial adapted to the psychocultural environment prior to absolute implementation.

Cultures are to be understood as systems—constituted of several entwined parts such that change in one produces that in the others. A development programme that deals with the method of production, for example, will set ripples in the entire social organisation. In a practical example, the government imposed prohibition of locally prepared rice beer by several tribal groups. Angani Nagas (prohibited to consume rice beer by the Church) do not brew it in their houses but purchase it from non-Christians. Preparing rice beer has emerged as a profitable vocation. It casts alteration in configuration of the economy (Mathur, 1990), emotional experience and expression of the people and social relations.

Social scientists have long pleaded for inclusion of tribal culture in development programmes. Tribal development should be endogenous and from within the system rather imposed from the exterior. Tribal development should maintain congruity with tribal culture and psychology or else it shall remain only far-fetched. This carries implications for taking tribal cognition and perception into cognisance. Development should maintain continuity with socio-cultural and perceptual nexus in which the tribals find themselves placed and from which they cannot be disentangled completely.

The history of tribal development is marked by periods of intense rejection and those of relative quiescence, consolidation and refinement. When the programmes and strategies devised by the government fall short of achieving stipulated targets it becomes imperative to discover the reasons that will adequately explain the condition of incomplete success. It is absolutely essential to discard disconnected reworkings of disparate themes from out of the past. The ground is set for inter-disciplinary meet to work out innovative strategies for tribal development. ■

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Hindutva: Militancy and Semitism

PRADEEP KUMAR

Many an attempt has been made in the last 150 years to impart some degree of militancy to Hinduism. The latter has for a long time been identified, rightly or wrongly, with tolerance of dissent, doctrinal openness and ideological heterogeneity. Even if the Hindus have been orthoprax, the great and the little traditions of their *dharma*. have left considerable scope for philosophical dissent. The great tradition has actually accommodated a large number of heterodox sects, animistic and totemic cults and religions without much effort.

However, an inevitable outcome has been the relative incohesiveness in the doctrinal orthodoxy. Polytheism and anthropomorphism coupled with an emphasis on ideological diversity, have tended to make some votaries of *Hindutva* a little bit worried about the "weak", "feminine" and organisationally "loose" character of the Hindu society.

The latter part of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century witnessed a large number of attempts to mould the Hindu society on Semitic lines. Semitism in this context came to be identified with monotheism, the concept of a chosen people, and belief in a revealed book. It therefore implied a degree of intolerance towards the "infidels" and some degree of endeavours towards bringing others into the fold of the revealed religion.

However, for the votaries of *Hindutva*, to Semitise their religion was bound to be a difficult task in the absence of any such concepts in the Hindu view of *dharma*. *Dharma*, like its predecessor *rta*, connoted the cosmic law, which was reflected in all animate beings and even inanimate things. Thus animals, plants, water, fire and earth—all had their respective *dharma*. Such a concept of *dharma* was obviously far from being anywhere near the modern day "religion" which actually is a mistranslation of a purely indigenous phenomenon.

Paradoxically, all those who eulogised Hinduism for the virtues of doctrinal heterodoxy, tolerance and dissent, ended up putting up a challenge before the votaries of the Semitic Hinduism. The challenge became still more pronounced and provocative when in the post-independence days the Marxists and the *a la* Marxists made a frontal attack on Hindu "fundamentalism" while tolerating and even condoning minority communalism on the plea that it was "protective" and "defensive" in nature. The re-emergence of Hindu militancy and organisational efforts in the 1980s should be seen in this light. This is, in a way, the culmination of a process which began nearly one and a half centuries ago as a reaction to the perceived danger from Christianity and Islam. Dayanand, Bankim, Aurbindo, Tilak, Savarkar, Golwalkar and Advani and Joshi should be seen in a continuum, even though the calibre and credentials of these votaries may vary a great deal.

The author is a Reader, Department of Political Science, Panjab University, Chandigarh.

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THE VHP's current emphasis on the Hindu identity, *Garv se kaho ham Hindu hein* (take pride in calling yourself a Hindu), is a direct outcome of the feeling among the votaries of *Hindutva* that secularism (read pseudo-secularism) has been to the disadvantage of the Hindus who constitute a majority in the country. The exhortations by the Nehruvians and the "progressives" for a more tolerant Hindu ethos *vis-a-vis* the minorities (read the Muslims), has also strengthened the suspicion that the secularists among the Indian intellectuals are all hell bent upon decimating Hindu pride and culture. Such pronouncements by the Leftists as, the Hindu God Ram and his Ayodhya (not merely the temple) are only a mythological belief, the Kushana and not the Gupta period are the "golden" period of Indian history, and most members of the Hindu divine pantheon are merely ahistorical figures, have also watered the roots of the *Hindutva* ideology in the north. What is, however, really important is not the authenticity of this ideology, but the fact that many have actually shared these views, and consequently covertly, or overtly, provided the infrastructural support to the *Hindutva* wave.

The most significant task before the *Hindutva* leaders is to make the Hindu community (or nation as they prefer to call), a more cohesive and closely knit one, which can take upon itself the militancy spirit easily. The real dilemma of course is that the unorthodox nature of the Hindu *dharma* actually does not allow them to succeed in these attempts. All efforts to elevate the *Gita* to the status of the supreme revealed book of the Hindus during the national movement actually failed, and a plethora of Hindu gods and goddesses bounced back with a vengeance. However, since on the proselytising front no such tradition existed, *Shuddhi,* that is, reconversion of Muslims and Christians in to the Hindu religion, was taken up by the Hindu *sangathans*. Even the concept of *punya bhu* (sacred land) as distinct from *pitri bhu* (fatherland), was popularised by Savarkar. This was somewhat akin to the Semitic version of the holy land or the chosen land. Even though most such efforts inducted "energism" into the Hindu society, their impact at the most was temporary and peripheral. However, the pre-independence votaries of *Hindutva* had an advantage that their ideology came to be identified with anti-imperialism because of the situational compulsions, and consequently earned a lot of respectability. Moreover, most Muslim nations of the world that today boldly proclaim their Islamic credentials, had either not been born or had not existed in the present form. This also made the *Hindutva* leaders of yester years go deeper into the philosophy and history of the Hindu *dharma* and "discover" legitimacy for their ideology. Contrary to this, Islamic fundamentalism and more particularly the division of the subcontinent on the basis of religion, ending up in the creation of the Mislim state of Pakistan, have really made the job of the *Hindutva* protagonists very simple and legitimate in the eyes of their followers, won over in the last decade or so.

However, while there may be many takers of the militant *Hindutva* ideology today, the attempts at Semitisation of the Hindu religion by sifting out the "Ahmadias" from among the faithful Hindus, have very little chances of success in view of the evolved nature of their religion. And the *Hindu rashtra* of their conception, even if achieved, will not be able to survive in the absence of the coherently knit ideology of a Semitic religion. This is because historically the unity among the Hindus has been demanded only by way of a cultural response to the out side challenge, and has never been an outcome of a real need for a spiritual resurgence. If the militancy of the *Shuddhi* and *Sangathan* was a response to the *Tanzim* and the *Tabligh,* the present-day *Hindutva* is a reaction to the "pseudo-secularim" of the Indian state. ■

Detention of Social Activists Decried

The following is the statement issued by Latika Lahiri, President, Peoples' Rights Organisation (PRO), protesting against the preventive detention under the NSA of young social activists, Irfan Engineer and Vir Singh Patel, in Baroda Central Jail.

The Peoples' Rights Organisation (PRO), a human rights body, is extremely concerned to learn that young social activists, Irfan Engineer and Vir Singh Patel, have recently been arrested by the Government of Gujarat under the National Security Act (NSA) and are presently lodged under preventive detention in the Baroda Central Jail.

The Peoples' Rights Organisation (PRO) strongly protests the unlawful, arbitrary and unprovoked detentions of Irfan Engineer and Vir Singh Patel. The only reason for their preventive detention seems to be that they were peacefully agitating for the rights of the Dang tribals of Gujarat who are being subjected to grave social oppression and intolerable economic exploitation.

The Peoples' Rights Organisation (PRO) has learnt from reliable sources that the Government of Gujarat has let loose great repression against the Dang tribals and news is coming of their women being raped and their men tortured. Even the former Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, B.D. Sharma, was recently manhandled by the Gujarat State Reserve Police when he went to inquire into the condition of the Dang tribals.

The PRO demands that the Government of Gujarat withdraw all the false charges against Irfan Engineer and Vir Singh Patel, and immediately and unconditionally release them from preventive detention under the NSA. The PRO also demands that the Government of Gujarat must forthwith stop the terrible repression unleashed on the Dang tribals of Gujarat and meet their legitimate and genuine demands immediately. We also believe that an independent Commission of Inquiry should be instituted soon to probe into all the grave charges of atrocities alleged to have been committed against the Dang tribals of Gujarat.

In keeping with its thinking as outlined above, the Peoples' Rights Organisation (PRO) has sent a telegram to Chimanbhai Patel, Chief Minister of Gujarat, strongly protesting against the arbitrary detention of Irfan Engineer and Vir Singh Patel, demanding their immediate release and asking him to stop the repression of the Dang tribals. ■

Peace by Piece in Yugoslavia

ANURADHA MITRA CHENOY

The right to self-determination; supra-nationalism; minority rights; conflict resolution; the fate of fledgling democracies; the interpretation of history and perception of internal security—these are all part of the amalgam which is at the base of the break-up of Yugoslavia.

The futility of nationalism in its chauvinist, irridentist and revanchist forms is most obvious in strife-torn Yugoslavia in its critical moment. What is worse is that even the establishment of independent republics, out of the erstwhile Yugoslavia, may not lead to a lasting peace or stability. This scenario, moreover, is tragic not only for the people caught in the crossfire, but it would also destabilise the entire region of South-East Europe. In the reshuffling of boundaries, the issue of the external boundaries of other countries would also be raised. Besides this, varied lessons will be drawn by the kind of response the beseiged minorities have received from the international community.

The fact that Yugoslavia is an ethnic patchwork not dissimilar to the Soviet Union, or most Third World states, least of all India, brings the problem closer home. The ethnic groups have not been altogether cordial through history. The worst discord historically has been between the Serbs (who were a majority in the region) and the Croats, though the Slovenes, Macedonians, Albanians and others also have differences. During World War II, however, Serbo-Croat rivalry further accentuated, when a Croatian regime (the Ustashe) aspired for independent statehood. They, therefore, established a puppet regime under Nazi supervision from 1941-1944. About 700,000 Serbs were killed during this period, a fact not forgiven by the Serbs (the Chetniks).

This bitterness, however, was blocked by the communist dictatorship after the War. Tito (a Croat) blocked out the development of democratic consciousness but also jammed inter-ethnic nationalism by using techniques of repressive tolerence and an ideology which focused on inter-class contradictions rather than inter-ethnic antagonism.

The author is an Associate Professor, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

The collapse of the communist regime with the withdrawal of its backers (especially the Soviet Union), led to the establishment of 'a free-for-all' democracy without the sanctity of well tried or established institutions, norms or codes. The compelling need for a federal set up and plural institutions was recompensed by a collective rotating presidency, with competing popularist leaders, seeking to satisfy their constituencies which were based largely on ethnic regions.

The onset of the 1990 elections then, did not require much ingeniousness on the part of the contending leaders, to develop their support base, political demands, mobilising strategy and tactics on ethnic lines. Most active on this front was the Serb leader, Milosevic, who drew freely from past historical experience and envisaged a Serb-dominated Yugoslavia, and Franjo Tudjman, leader of the Croats, who expressed intentions of an independent Croatia. Slovenia likewise proclaimed its decision to secede.

The Serb minority in Croatian regions panicked and started revolting. Similarly, Croats in Serb areas and Croats at large feared Serb repression. These fears were reinforced by military intervention and fighting by both sides. Escalation of these events were obvious since the leadership refused to yield, or take steps to reassure factions. Moreover, the Serb-dominated Yugoslav army (70 per cent of the officers are Serbs) under Milosevic, ransacked Croat areas village by village ostensibly to save the Serbs and protect the Union but with the motive of changing the fluid borders, as hopes of a united Yugoslavia gave way to the establishment of separate nation-states.

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WHILE 14 calls for cease fire lay shattered and civil war continued, the response from the international community was one of "looking with disapproval". The UN imposed an arms embargo and threatened an oil embargo. The initiative was left to the European Community which was divided on the issue. The EC representative, Lord Carrington, sponsored a peace conference which advocated that Yugoslavia be an association of sovereign republics with common currency, internal borders be altered only by mutual agreement, that disputed regions where ethnic minorities live be demilitarised and put under international supervision, and that Kosovo and Vojvodina under Serb control, should revert to their earlier status as autonomous republics.

The official position of the Serbs, as expressed by V. Jovanovic, the Minister of External Affairs of the Republic of Serbia (*Review of International Affairs*, Vol. XLII, December 1991) was one which continued to envision a united Yugoslavia based on a federal pattern. The Minister defended the Yugoslav army for carrying out the tasks of trying to maintain a united Yugoslavia assigned it by the Constitution and the President.

This view revealed Serb aggression and use of force which only heightened fears of the minority community. Further, barbaric acts by the Serb controlled federal army were exposed to the international community during the seige of various Croat towns like Vukovar, Dubrovnik, Carlovac and others, where civilian casualties were the predominant feature. These areas were subject to the onslaught of multiple-launch rockets; incineration of property; bombing and every other possible horror.

The Croats have continuously viewed the Yugoslav army action as aggression, and asked for the independence and reconstruction of Croatia be included in the inter-national agenda. They further protested against the Serb tactic of changing the borders by force, aided by the political structures of Serbia. (Dr. Z. Separovic, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Croatia, interview, *International Affairs*, Vol. XLII, December, 1991)

The Croat position has been championed primarily by Germany (supported by Austria and Hungary), who insisted on the recognition of Croatia and Slovenia. The EC which was prone to a position of neutrality, and together with the UN tried to reach some kind of agreement, was sidelined. The marginalisation of the EC was not just because of Germany's pressure but also due to the futility of trying to bring together communities irreconciliably torn apart. The recognition of Croatia and Slovenia by the EC thus followed on January 15. (Bulgaria and the Baltics have also given them recognition.) It is likely that the USA and the rest of the international community would follow suit, except China which supports the Serbs' position.

Independence of Slovenia and Croatia will be followed by demands for independence by the Albanians in Kosovo and from the Macedonians in Bosnia-Herzegovina. (The Albanians and Hungarians identify with these two groups respectively.) History has shown time and again that conservative nationalism has its own logic, and tragic consequences.

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AS far as the regimes of the Yugoslav republics go, as Milovan Djilas (*New Statesman and Society*, 13 September, 1991) has said, there are no essential differences between them, though the Serb regime is Communist-oriented and Croats Right-dominated, and democratically elected. In all the regimes the parliaments are ineffectual, the Opposition weak, information is controlled and there is a lack of democratic consciousness or method.

Since the Serbs demand that the Serb population in Croatia be independent of Croatia, the ethnic dispute would continue, leading to more exile and possible diaspora of population. Nationalism however, is not the only problem of erstwhile Yugoslavia. The shattered economy and battered civilians would take years to normalise. The leadership of the Republics, however, find it more convenient to pay attention to the ethnic aspect at the cost of the others.

The European Community which has set up negotiating channels for solving problems in Europe like the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) need to initiate a long-term dialogue and method of conflict resolution to sort out the problem of nationalism and national self-determination.

World over it has been established that there are no peaceful procedures available for settling the right to self-determination. Obviously every such right cannot be satisfied. Nor is every minority a viable nation-state. But at the same time, the old-world norm of non-interference in the ultimate right by a state to suppress its citizens within its territory is no longer adequate. If democracy and human rights are the passwords to our current civilisation, then mechanisms to ensure this must be on the agenda.

The case of Yugoslavia is not far from home. If communities (especially minorities) within a state structure feel threatened, and their rights and autonomy are not protected, these fears get translated into territorial claims (or secession). This often leads to a reaction of supra-nationalism and further oppression and deepening of crises, which is easy for leaders who lack any other base to manipulate. The result is then like the tragedy of Yugoslavia, and earlier tragedies elsewhere. ■

Awards, Prizes and Trivialisation of Virtue

AVIJIT PATHAK

No society can survive without remembering its virtues, its bright spots, its positive stories of courage and dignity. But this process of remembering, it should be realised, does not remain spontaneous all the time. Because spontaneous remembering is almost like living a life nearer to all that is remembered: virtue, courage and dignity. As society begins to degenerate and its everyday life world gets increasingly separated from the realm of beauty and aesthetics, the process of remembering we are talking about ceases to be spontaneous, it gets institutionalised and institutionalised through a complex network of prizes, awards and honours.

In other words, all that is beautiful ought to be awarded, given prizes. Because there is no other way society can recognise its forgotten virtues, its thickness can see only what is gorgeous, even beauty without prizes, ornaments and labels goes beyond its mental horizon. Not surprisingly then, the more the prizes and the awards, the more it reveals society's degeneration, its remoteness from beauty and aesthetics.

How does one react when one is told that the nation has honoured Netaji and Azad? Perhaps one would argue that it is certainly a positive gesture because, even though late, the nation has finally decided not to forget its two great sons. Even when there is an element of truth in this kind of argument, what is, however, not difficult to see is that Netaji or Azad as *Bharat Ratna* makes us wonder. Because beneath it one sees an absurd and ugly attempt: an attempt to possess the infinite through the finite; it is like reducing all differences between the sacred and the profane.

An honour that equates the mundane politics of many of our contemporary Machiavellians with the epic story of Netaji or Azad makes us laugh. This laughter is tragic as well as comic. Who, however, realises? The absurd game continues. And there seems no reason to get surprised if we are told that *Bharat Ratna* has also been awarded to all those who created the Vedas and the Upanishads, to Guatam Buddha, to Ashok, Akbar, Raja Rammohan Roy....

What ought to be seen in the continual recurrence of this absurd drama is, as we have already said, the split that has taken place between the past and the present, between life as it exists and what it ought to be. Life's instrumental rationality—earn more and buy a washing machine; corruption is what prevails and everything else is madness—does not want to remember that once upon a time there was a Gandhi or a Tagore, a Vivekananda or a Bhagat Singh. History is read and forgotten. History can be remembered only through melodrama, through noise. Unless you shout and regard a Gandhi or a Tagore as *Bharat Ratna*, how can you remember them? Because with modernisation and more modernisation we see only packages, attractive packages, instant success and glory. Man understands success!

As a result, two things happen. First, success stories are shortcuts, easy ways out. For example, to see Gandhi only as *Bharat Ratna* (a possibility that can no longer be denied), as an attractive package is to forget all that made a timid Mohandas into a charismatic Gandhi—his continual suffering, his prayer, his painful, yet penetrating, journey towards the inner world. And secondly, prizes, awards and honours can always be kept in showcases. Man is clever enough to know that prizes do not produce things, prizes are not for the real world. In other words, the moment beauty is awarded and given a prize, it loses its aliveness. It becomes a stone, a statue, a museum piece. The fact is that Netaji or Azad as *Bharat Ratna* has already been reified. Because in a ugly world beauty can find itself only in a museum!

Another thing needs to be observed. Beneath the institutionalisation of prizes lies another manifestation of the prevailing corruption: It is like appropriating the past through the rationale of the present. Or it is like looking at beauty through the rationale of power and arrogance. What is this rationale? It goes without saying that the rationale is the rationale of a modern state.

In our times, the state has

The author is an Assistant Professor, Centre for the Study of Social Systems, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

become, if not the only, perhaps the most dominant 'judge'. It judges and evaluates virtue, courage, dignity and even dissent. To exist is to get certified by the state! And hence there is no longer any beauty that can retain its solitude, radiate in silence, exist in its own right. So how can Gautam Buddha exist without begin certified by the state, its chosen experts and judges? This is the madness of power; it is hardly aware of its limits; its irony is that it seeks to appropriate even what, because of its very nature, refuses appropriation.

This is not to suggest that the prizes, awards and honours are altogether meaningless. Even if greatness needs no award, its special identification does help not so great people to offer their respect and gratitude. A proposition of this kind sounds reasonable. Yet, what seems difficult to deny is that what we are seeing before our eyes is not that humbleness, that authenticity which we need to surrender ourselves before the vastness of the great and the noble and then alter the rhythm of our life world. Instead, what we see is a drama, an absurd drama in which we recall God only to curcify Him. ■

NAYYAR: Dunkel Text

(Continued from page 9)

inputs for the agricultural sector, whether on fertilisers, irrigation, power or credit, can only be made available for low-income farmers. Thus, the present regimes of explicit or implicit subsidies, which do not differentiate between farmers by size of holding, would be open to question. The practice of public utilities charging concessional prices from the agricultural sector, followed by several State Governments in India, would no longer be tenable.

IV. WHAT NEXT?

THE draft Final Act in the Dunkel Text is characterised by a take-it-or-leave-it syndrome that is implicit in its composite structure and discernible between the lines. It cannot and should not be accepted as *fait accompli*. As a sovereign nation state, which is one of the original contracting parties in the GATT, we must endeavour to reopen the negotiations on a *few* matters that are of strategic concern to us. The perception that we are in a small minority, or even alone, at the present juncture, should not lead us to abandon the negotiations and sign on the dotted line. It is this 'isolation paradox' which has, perhaps, coaxed many reluctant developing countries into a posture of acceptance. The pursuit of national interest is worthwhile so long as there is any room for manouevre, however limited it may be. At this stage, in terms of strategy and tactics, I would suggest three alternative approaches in a descending order of preference.

As a first option, we should insist on a formal separation of the agreements on trade in goods, trade in services and trade-related intellectual property rights, which appear as separate annexes in the Dunkel Text. We should seek a deletion of the linkages between the different agreements through integrated dispute settlement mechanisms which allow for retaliation across sectors. This would be consistent with our stance so far on the issue of lodgement and the problem of cross-retaliation. At the same time, we should retain the freedom to choose between agreements that are acceptable and those that are not.

The next option, if the agreements cannot be separated, is to consider acceptance of the Dunkel Text, but on a strict understanding of 'best endeavour', so that legislative changes would be made if and only if approved by Parliament which must remain sovereign. Pending that, the extant rights under the GATT must remain unimpaired. This stand should not sound unrealistic because the United States also may agree only to a 'best-endeavour' approach when it comes to the removal of Super 301 from their statute book, once the new dispute settlement procedures are in place.

In conclusion, it would not be out of place to mention an option that may be a last resort. It has always been my judgement that, from the perspective of the developing countries, multilateralism is superior to bilateralism or plurilateralism. The reason is simple: In a world of unequal partners, a multilateral trading system should provide some protection to the weak whereas bilateral trade relations would favour the strong. Yet, the asymmetries and the inequalities implicit in the Dunkel Text leave this basic proposition open to question; and our faith in miltilateralism may turn out to be naive if such multilateralism is used to legitimise inequtiy. The interests of the industrialised countries are the focus of attention, while the interests of the developing countries are the object of neglect. The benefits for us are negligible. The costs may be substantial. The time has perhaps come for the government to evaluate with utmost care the cost and benefits of an unequal international trading system, which bestows few rights and imposes many obligations on the developing countries. It is not obvious that we would be worse-off without it. ■

Nadine Gordimer

M.C. BHATTACHARYA

Nadine Gordimer, winner of the 1991 Nobel Prize for Literature, is a White English-speaking South African writer who has written novels and short stories about the tensions of life under apartheid.

"Gordimer writes with intense immediacy about the extremely complicated personal and social relationships in her environment," the Swedish Academy said in its award citation.

"At the same time, as she feels a political involvement—and takes action on that basis—she does not permit this to encroach on her writings. Nevertheless her literary works, in giving profound insights into the historical process, help to shape this process," it said. The South African Nobel Peace Prize winner, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and other anti-apartheid leaders and writers have applauded the bestowing of the Nobel Literature Prize on Gordimer.

Tutu said: "She is a wonderful artist who has been able to capture the suffering of the people under apartheid." Gordimer herself was quoted as saying in New York that the award will now expose South African writers to the world. Nadine Gordimer—whose father was a Lithuanian born Jewish watch-maker and whose mother was an emigré from England—was born in spring in the Transvaal on November 20, 1923.

Disgusted since childhood with the White society, she was rebellious and retained a mediocre record in school. But from the age of nine she was a precocious writer. She started selling stores to various periodicals in 1939.

As the years rolled by she became widely known at home and abroad as a committed political writer. Her books tend to concentrate mainly on the human suffering wrought by apartheid, showing the way in which government legislation affects individual lifes.

In 1948, she moved to Johannesburg where she has continued to live.

Uyas Krige, a South African writer, introduced Gordimer to a New York literary agent in 1950. She then began contributing fiction and non-fiction to periodicals in the United States. From 1969 to 1971, she held several short-term academic assignments in the United States, and in 1975 she was a Visiting Professor at Barnard College.

Authors of fictional works which have Africa as their locale can be divided into those of European descent and those of African descent. Among those of European descent are persons whose lives have been spent largely in Africa while others are mere birds of passage. The English writers are clustered in the Union of South Africa which has now produced a considerable body of modern fiction of international repute.

In South Africa, creative writing in English by Blacks and Coloureds has been impeded by racial oppression and censorship. The novelist Peter Abrahams and poet Dennis Brutus found conditions so repressive that they left South Africa for their own safety.

In 1950, the emergence of magazines designed for non-White readers led to a spurt of short story writing which practically ceased when the harsh Publication and Entertainment Act of 1963, the first of many such censorship laws, severely limited popular and political publications alike.

Gordimer's works revolt against her country's apartheid system of racial separation. Although she criticises, often sharply, the White government's racial policies, that government no longer bans any of her writings.

Literary Works

Gordimer has written more than two hundred short stories. *Something Out There* is her ninth book of short stories, the others being *Face to Face* (1949), *The Soft Voice of Serpent* (1952), *Six Feet of the Country* (1956), *Friday's Footprint* (1960), *Not for Publication* (1965), *Livingstone's Companions* (1971), *Selected Stories* (1976) and *A Soldier's Embrace* (1980). In 1984, *Something Out There* was well received by critics largely because of the title novella—a story about differing reactions among the White persons in the area of Johannesburg, to the destructive activities of a mysterious dark-coloured anthropoid. As the story progresses, the anthropoid becomes a symbol of a different kind of fear.

Many of Gordimer's stories are about the effect on personal character of the expectations of family and society. Her major works include idyllic virtues of country life, family ties and insight into the anger and agony of the segregated community. Gordimer's fictions fascinate Indian leaders largely because of her themes which are very much analogous to our social environment where exist middle class guilt and suppression of the poverty-stricken devoid of political consciousness.

Gordimer's novels, which were banned by South Africa's White minority government, include *The Living Days* (1953), *A World of Strangers* (1958), *Occasion of Loving* (1963), *The Late Bourgeois World* (1966), *A Guest of Honour* (1970), *Burger's Daughter* (1979) and *July's People* (1981). Her latest book *My Son's Story* won her the South African Central News Agency Award recently. The book deals with the injustices of political rights for the majority. Most of her novels depict the fact that political movement is the harbinger of social change. Her novels offer artistic insight into her country's problems. ■

BHATIA: Policy Changes

(Continued from page 16)

prescription is different from the disease, one may ask who manoeuvred it and why? Let, us diagnose this.

Currently in the industrialised countries the labour cost of production is exorbitantly high and demand either stagnation or a creeping rise. With this, calculations by the industrialists in these countries are that even with some additional transportation cost, production will be cheaper in India than in their own countries because of a substantially difference in labour cost. India also provides a substantial market because of its vast population and development programmes. Additionally, India enjoys a locational advantage in the continent. Consequently, a percentage of production could be sold either in India itself or in the neighbouring countries. In view of this, the main objective of the MNCs entering India appears to be to make use of the very cheap labour and get a market. Similarly, the objective of the Indian business class is to raise their share in the national cake by reducing the share of the working class. To achieve these objectives conditions are being created for a further reduction in the labour cost and also for lowering the bargaining power of the working class. The labour cost is being reduced by raising the cost of living index and freezing the wage rate, whereas the bargaining power will be reduced by creating surplus manpower. The policy of 'right to exit' and retrenchment will directly hit the working class.

Here it may also be pointed out that the World Bank and the IMF have been preaching for a market economy not only in goods and services, but in the factor market also. In the market economy the real wage rate is determined by the demand-supply conditions. When the market economy is fully adopted in Indian conditions, where labour supply is substantially higher than demand, the real wage rate has to come down by 30-40 per cent of the present level. Further, because it is unskilled labour which happens to be far in excess supply with a very low bargaining power because of their unorganised character and poverty-stricken conditions, this class is likely to be hit the hardest.

Already, due to the new industrial and trade policies, persons employed in many departments/offices of the government have been rendered surplus to be absorbed elsewhere or asked to seek voluntary retirement. In line with this is the decision taken at the recent National Development Council meeting to cut down about 10 per cent posts at the top and to retrench 1000 persons in three offices: the Chief Controller of Imports and Exports, the Cement Controllers' Office and the DGTD. In the private sector units like Escorts, Hindustan Motors, General Motors, etc. too retrenchment has started.

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IN conclusion, one finds that the IMF prescription is unsuitable for the socio-economic conditions in India. The side-effects of the prescription may result in the economy being paralysed. On the other hand, it appears that in order to serve the narrow interests, the macro-economic variables, such as prices, are being manipulated so as to lower the per person real earning of the working class. The policies being manoeuvred will create excess supply of labour and consequently reduce the workers' bargaining power in a substantial way.

These new policies are in direct conflict with our earlier policy of growth with equitable distribution. There is also a danger of neo-colonisation by the MNCs for the economic exploitation of India. ■

Two Cheers for Free Flow of Information

S.S. GILL

"The United States has long regarded," said President Reagan, "the principle of free flow of information as a cornerstone of any democratic political order". Being the prime mover behind the Information Revolution, the American stake in the "free flow of information" is quite understandable. Also, this commitment to a noble democratic ideal is a many splendoured thing.

In 1983 the UN General Assembly adopted a non-binding declaration of "principles governing the use by states of artificial earth satellites for international television broadcasting". The right of *prior consent* by the host country embodied in this resolution was supported by 108 nations. But true to its loyalty to free flow of information, the US opposed it tooth and nail. Again, about the same time, when the WHO drafted for national adoption a resolution to restrict aggressive forms of marketing and advertising for baby foods, America happened to be the only country to vote against it, thus reiterating strongly its adherence to the free flow of information!

Or, take the controversy surrounding the Western insistence on protection of intellectual property rights. On the face of it, this sounds a most reasonable and democratic proposition. After all, what could be fairer than safeguarding the information about industrial processes so as to enable the inventors and manufacturers to enjoy the fruits of their labour? But it is nobody's concern that the infinite diversity of germ plasm created through trial and experimentation over thousands of years by the farmers and breeders of the Third World has been systematically plundered by the agro-business transnational corporations (TNCs) without acknowledgement of their debt for this booty. The information about this unique genetic pool, though gleaned without paying a penny to its owners, is being sold back to the Third World after some clever manipulation under the garb of exclusive patents and copyrights.

The author is a former Secretary, Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

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THE most notable instance of this "principled" stand was perhaps the vigorous opposition by the US and other industrialised countries to the UNESCO's resolution on the New World Information and Communication Order. This resolution, based on the MacBride Commission Report, was a modest attempt to "correct the inequalities in the flow of information to and from developing countries and between those countries". As nearly 80 per cent of the world newsflow emanated from the Western news agencies and 90 per cent of the radio frequencies spectrum had been cornered by the developed countries, the UNESCO felt that this sort of extreme imbalance needed some corrective. There was a howl of protest from the First World delegates against this 'sinister design' to throttle the free flow of information and promotion of state intervention in the sacred precincts of democracy.

The fact of the matter is that the new information technology has radically changed the very character of information. The highly sophisticated, computerised methods for its generation, processing, transmission, storage, retrieval and dissemination have turned it into a high-priced commodity. Of course some categories of information always carried a price tag. Medicinal formulations, industrial or chemical processes, copyrighted products were all proprietory items of commerical value. But today information has become the basic element in production, distribution, administration, work and leisure. All this information is of a specialised nature; it requires expensive equipment and trained personnel for its manipulation and thus it is accessible only to those who can pay for it.

Two simultaneous results of the Information Revolution are of particular relevance to the Third World. On the one hand, we seem to be inundated by a deluge of information. Computers, optic fibres, lasers, satellites, etc. are the channels through which this information gushes forth. They are all creatures of high technology. And technology is always the handmaid of the culture which produces it. Created by advanced industrialised countries, this technology is a faithful servant of its masters. The computer programmes and data bases that we in India use were created in America, and designed to serve their work culture and habits of mind. By borrowing them wholesale we begin to view our work environment through alien glasses. Further, we not only tend to imitate foreign management practices, but also emulate role-models which have no roots in our milieu.

At a more innocuous level, let us look at a popular blessing of information technology. Bored stiff by the bland fare dished out by Doordarshan, television viewers are having their fill of entertaining programmes beamed from commercial satellites. First it was CNN, then Star TV, then BBC and now Pakistan TV. Many more such ventures are in the offing, including a regular Hindi channel. The more influential section of our society which watches these programmes, not only derives pleasure from this diversion, but also imbibes the social mores and political perceptions of the host country.

But this is only a small segment of the information colonialism to which technological advance exposes us. The second fall-out of the information revolution is much more fearsome. There are two main agencies which finance and control the communication technology. First, the military establishments, looking for ever more sophisticated weaponry. The leading player in this arena is the Pentagon. But for its massive subsidies to the American multinationals it would have been impossible to mount the sort of Research and Development effort that led to major breakthroughs in this field. Secondly, the multinationals themselves were quick to perceive the great commercial potential of the information technology and went all out to exploit its civilian uses.

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AS a result of these developments, the information revolution is completely dominated by the military-industrial complex which has absolutely no motivation to promote free flow of information. Military affairs are traditionally cloaked in secrecy, and multinationals are not known to freely share the fruits of their research with others. On the contrary, the communication multinationals and purveyors of information have a strong vested interest in creating information monopolies.

Another offshoot of this phenomenon is that as between the nation-state and the multinational corporations, the balance is tilting in favour of the latter. When these corporations do contracting jobs for the government in developing the most sophisticated weapon-systems, a lot of classified information from various official agencies has to be passed on to them. The highly specialised databases that they develop as a result thereof, far exceed in their range and complexity anything that the government has at its disposal. Here is a case where the original generator and owner of public information becomes dependent on private agencies for its efficient use. And the public is never given any access to it.

There were times when universities and research centres were public forums of free enquiry. Not so now. Scientific research has become highly expensive, and the universities, etc. depend heavily on liberal grants from the industrial giants. These grants are now given in such a slanted manner that research serves the best interests of the donors, and its results do not become public property. The case of Mobiloil's donation to the American Writers' Congress and its subsequent withdrawal on learning about its radical credentials illustrates the nature of intentions behind such generosity. The growing dependence of educational and cultural institutions on funding by the TNCs promotes the cult of self-censorship, and discourse becomes predictably conformist.

All these donors claim to be great champions of free flow of information. An executive of the largest computer firm once stated: "IBM does business in over 120 countries. We are, therefore, very dependent on free flow of information." All transnational financial institutions are strong advocates of this doctrine, as the trans-border flow of data along the international electronic highways is the life-line of their transactions.

The net outcome of these trends is that information is being withdrawn from its social context and turned into a commodity for sale. "It seems," says Jeremy Seabrook, "that more and more things are being taken away from people, and sold back to them in the form of commodities and services.... We surrender more and more of our substance, and wait for it to reappear in the marketplace, where we believe in its value because of the price tag it bears." Consequently, public information necessary for a well-informed citizenry may become increasingly scarce, thus eroding the very basis of democracy.

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IN a very real sense, information is power. And power is the domain of politics. In the international political arena, it is only the leaders of information technology who dominate the world. Their lofty pronouncements notwithstanding, they use the power of information only to extend and tighten their hegemonic control, either directly or through their transnational corporations. And for the people, they have to keep alive the illusion of free flow of information which, as President Reagan asserted, is the "cornerstone of any democracy". But in actual fact, said H. Schiller, "people in the US may be among the globe's least knowledgeable in comprehending the sentiments and changes of recent decades in the international arena". But that bothers not the grubby masses for whom "a supermarket is a democratic citadel, the place where democracy is practiced daily by the shoppers in their numerous decisions and choices".

And when it comes to a crunch, these gatekeepers of information know only too well as to how to divert or choke its flow. When the UNESCO became really serious about free flow of information in the Third World countries, the US and the UK stopped their contributions to it, walked out of the forum, and did not rest till its intrepid Director General, M' Bow, was hounded out of office. Nearer home, when the NAMEDIA conference was held in Delhi in 1983, the *New York Times* did not write a word about it, though it was a major media event attended by a galaxy of Third World celebrities.■

EABRA: Survey & Budget

(Continued from page 5)

business world. So long as India demands gold, eligible persons are available for bringing gold legally into India and generally would not have resources to import five kilograms of gold, and that too every six months, the smugglers have only to start operating openly and legally as gold-importers and dealers. They will have to buy foreign exchange against rupees or their black wealth stashed away in tax havens. Not only shall the *hawalas* continue, they will thrive—legally of course! One can see then how thin is the line dividing legality from illegality. The immediate losers will, of course, be the customs staff. The fall in the dowry tag attached to overly eligible bachelors working with the customs may shortly provide a measure of the change.

Such unproductive uses of external resources may, of course, stabilise after a while. But the gold bonds scheme would succeed only to a minor extent for converting this unproductive gold into a productive use as visualised by our neo-mercantilists. With exemption from scrutiny of the source of gold, the black sector may well use it as a regular window for the laundering of black incomes and wealth. Would not the underworld also be able to avail of this scheme?

The impact of these gold schemes on the open market availability of foreign exchange for financing imports and the differential between the official and market price of foreign exchange (a mechanism to render official devaluation redundant by making 60 per cent exchange resources subject to market forces, except by pointing out the large and growing difference between the official and market price of the rupee) will have to be watched carefully to see the impact on the real, productive sectors of the economy.

How this model will tell on the health and survival of the public sector is a crucial question for the future of social development in India. Denigrated, starved of investible funds, further reduced by the lowering of SLR as the Survey admits in so many words (p. 20 end of para 3), partially privatised "in order to raise non-inflationary finance for development" (p. 14), with increased multifaceted competition, the public sector enterprises have been given onerous financial responsibilities. Having provided Rs 1049 crores by way of profits and dividends in 1991-92 (RE) the Budget for 1992-93 now demands Rs 2622 crores from them. The internal and extra-budgetary sources of those enterprises financed 56 per cent of the Central Plan outlay during the preceding year. This demand has been now hiked to about Rs 30,000 crores, for financing over 61 per cent of the Central Plan against Rs 18,501 crores of budgetary support to it.

While the public enterprises are being dethroned from their leading role, their fiscal contribution is being steadily increased. The privatisers may better take note of this for its implications. The Budget support to the public enterprises has been lowered sizeably. The total capital outlays too have been cut with a view to contain the deficit. Dividends will have to be paid to the private equity holders. And despite their much-maligned inefficiency, the PSUs are expected to provide more investible resources! It may be noted that budgeting is a tricky exercise, particularly when it is prepared under the commitment of containing the deficit to a stipulated figure. One wonders how realistic these expectations from the PSUs are, let alone the question of ideological propriety of a regime clipping the wings of the PSUs for externally-inspired (if not imposed) ideological considerations, or on the basis of negative arguments based on the supposed fiasco of 'socialism'. Not learning from the experience of the Eastern bloc which failed to make use of the market mechanism, we seem to be swinging to the other extreme: denying to ourselves the proven potential of planning and the public sector.

For reasons of space, we are not taking up the questions flowing from the pattern of public spending and the new biases it operationalises, like increasing the allocation for civil aviation while reducing that for employment schemes, let alone the question of making it a large enough first charge for operationalising the right to participate in economic activities and markets.

The basic fallacy in the entire Budget and associated policy package is the announced and reinforced policy preference of according primacy to economic growth, irrespective of its agents, leaders, pattern, its attainability and substainability, sharing of its costs and benefits and the ecological and cultural dimensions. This is a classic example of stubborn conservatism in the face of irrefutable logic and historical and contemporary evidence and when so much water has been carried to the sea of social knowledge by all the mighty rivers of various schools of thought. ■

HIREMATH: India's Nuclear Policy

(Continued from page 6)

and investments.

And now the Foreign Secretary, "Mani" Dixit, will be in Washington this week. His visit was described in a report from the US capital as being in response to a State Department invitation to discuss nuclear non-proliferation. The Ministry of External Affairs has promptly clarified that the visit would really be for a comprehensive discussion on a wide range of bilateral issues. This is as it should be. But America's current preoccupation with nuclear matters in South Asia, especially after Shahryar Khan's recent confession about Pakistan's nuclear capability, cannot be ignored.

An interesting new development will be the "coincidental" visit to New Delhi, around the same time as Dixit's sojourn in Washington, of a formidable team of scholars from the University of Illinois to participate in a seminar on "Global Disarmament and Arms Control". These academics are members of the university's programme for Arms Control, Disarmament and International Security (ACDIS). It would be relevant to recall that the Co-Director of ACDIS is Professor Stephen Phillip Cohen, an erstwhile member of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff who, according to a *New York Times* despatch from Washington, has recently suggested "that a permanent seat for India on the UN Security Council should be linked with greater cooperation on nuclear controls".

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AS interactions and even coordinated policy formulation between academe and the State Department are a hallowed tradition in the United States, it would indeed be useful if the Indian participants in the forthcoming seminar are able to carry conviction by putting across our nuclear policy in a well-reasoned and convincing manner, and not merely engage in trading polemics. The Indian nuclear policy was again admirably summed up by President Venkataraman in opening of the current Budget session of Parliament when he said: "We believe that given the global reach of nuclear weapons, we need to follow a global approach with regard to the nuclear disarmament issue. Partial or piecemeal measures, such as limited Nuclear Weapons Free Zones, therefore, seem to be of little validity and could even detract us from our ultimate goal."

The nuclear debate is likely to continue without end, until nuclear weapons have been ended altogether. But that seems to be a wholly unlikely and unrealistic prospect. From time to time, gentle persuasion of target countries is likely to yield place to coercion by the advocates of nuclear non-proliferation, as in the aftermath of Desert Storm. Similar action could even be expected from states that claim to be non-nuclear, if only to prevent their real or perceived adversaries from stealing a stealthy march over them on the road to nuclear weaponry. This, in fact, is what happened in the case of Israel's attack on Iraq's reactor at Osirak, and Iraq's bombing of Iran's nuclear plant under construction at Bushaira!

But the nuclear genie is already on the prowl and even if all existing nuclear weapons can theoretically be eliminated, there is no way in which nuclear technology can be disinvented, or prevented from being sold surreptitiously to the highest bidder, or even stolen and smuggled across international borders. There is ample evidence to believe that such things have happened in the past.

During the long years when the NATO and the Warsaw Pact confronted each other with their countervailing nuclear arsenals, it was conventional wisdom for both sides to feel that these weapons were instrumental in preventing the outbreak of armed hostilities between times. In an outspoken address to the Soviet General Staff in Moscow during November 1990, when the Cold War had already started receding, Michael Quinlan, the British Permanent Under Secretary for Defence, described nuclear weapons as "the keystone of an arch of freedom from war". With the dawn of today's multipolar world, there may be many such arches and many more keystones to be set in place. ■

(Courtesy: *The Pioneer*)

Perish the Troika

SOM BENEGAL

(Meeting of the Congress of Deputies. No one is quite sure who the deputies are and of which Congress. From the fact that this is in Moscow, not in Minsk in Byelrus, or Kiev in the Ukraine, or Tashkent in Uzbekistan, etc. etc., we know it is still in the Russian part of the once-great USSR and once-feared Soviet Union. The fact that the meeting is in the White House (not Washington D.C. but the Kremlin) tells us at once that it is Yoris Beltsin's show. This is made even more plain when the CNN, the BBC and other TV cameras catch Gikhail Morbachev in the sixteenth chair of the thirtieth row of the Great Hall.)

(Enter Beltsin, shaking his hands held up in the manner of victorious boxers)

Beltsin: Comrade deputies—I beg your pardon, habits die hard! Ladies and gentlemen, I apologise for calling you Comrades. It is just a verbal hangover. After *perestroika* and *glasnost* we are restructured as ladies and gentlemen. *(Cheers from the audience)* We are now in tune with world custom, especially the Western world whom we should have emulated but did not in all these years. *(Groans and cries of "Don't remind us")* Why, Comrades, I mean ladies and gentlemen? Thanks to that misguided intellectual called Marx. *(Pauses pregnantly)* Can we call him intellectual anymore? *(Burst of laughter, in which Beltsin modestly joins)* Or that Marxist activist called Lenin? What a misguided idealist he was! Can we call him an idealist when he had no understanding of ideal or ideology except what he learnt from *Das Kapital,* read while on a secret train from Berlin to Finlandia station in Moscow. He tried, ladies and gentlemen, to make capital out of it! *(More raucous laughter, cheers, cries of "give us more, Beltsin")* Wait, Comrades, I mean, ladies and gentlemen, I have not finished yet. How can we forget that great buffoon Stalin who fought endless challenges to the Soviet state? With his talk of the Great Patriotic War? Khrushchev has told us all. But for him we might long ago have saved ourselves from the dreamless nightmare of Communism, or, as we used to say, transitional Socialism, or Socialist realism! *(Laughter, rising to a crescendo. All stand up and cry "Heil Beltsin!")* No, no, no. Nazi greetings may sound nice but they are not nice, right now.

Comrades, I mean ladies and gentlemen, I come to bury Marx—and here I must add Engels—*(giggles from the audience)*, Lenin, Stalin, Malenkov, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, and all the other comedians who followed, not to praise them. But I will praise Morbachev, who modestly sits somewhere in this audience—I do not know where, such is his modesty. I will praise him before burying him. *(Cries of "hurry up, he needs us, we don't need him")*

Patience, friends, Russians *(here there is some murmur of dissent especially from the Ukrainians, Georgians and Tadjiks)*—countrymen of the Commonwealth. Let us recall what he has done. Not what Churchill in the twenties, Hitler in the forties and even Americans in the eighties with all their might and armaments. Without a single shot being fired, he has brought down the Soviet Union like a house of cards. Quite rightly, he has earned his name as the Man of the Century, Nobel Prize Winner and Limca Book of Records. *(There is no clapping, no cheer rising to an ovation, no one stands up)* I think you have got my point.

But Comrades—ladies and gentlemen—as Morbachev loved me, I weep for him; as he was fortunate in leading us, I rejoice; as he was valiant in his *perestroika* and *glasnost,* I honour him; but as he made mistakes, I have finished him. *(Cheers, and cries of "Yori, you're the one!")* But wait, Morbachev is an honourable man (so are the rest, Ligachev, and Shevardnadze, all honourable men). The quality of mercy is not strained. It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven. And it droppeth upon Morbachev in the form of 10,000 roubles a month, a *dacha,* two cars and twenty guards. *(Groans of "What about us!")*

(Here Beltsin smiles) Don't worry. At one time the Americans used to say in horror, "The Russians Are Coming, the Russians Are Coming!". Now we can say in sheer joy, "The Americans Are Coming, the Americans Are Coming!"

We have perished the *troika* of Morbachev, Ligachev and Shevardnadze. We can now raise a glass to Yankee *glasnost.*

(Cheers, rhythmic clapping, rising to an ovation; all stand up and sing "America the Beautiful") ■

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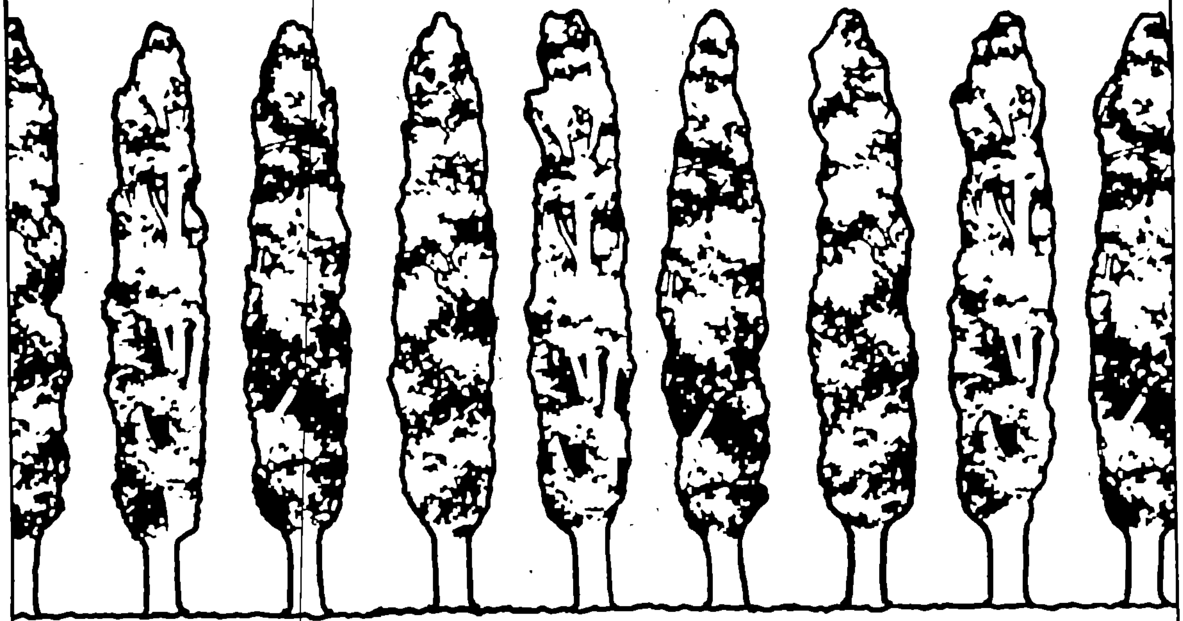

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Call for Nuclear Debate ● Anatomy of Union Budget

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POLITICAL NOTEBOOK

The Question of Sovereignty

Is the litmus test really over? The Narasimha Rao Government has, for the first time since its installation last June, convincingly won the confidence vote on the floor of the Lok Sabha The President's Address has been adopted by both the Houses of Parliament.

In any parliamentary democracy it is the Opposition's prerogative—and obligation—to challenge the government in power on vital issues and vote against it whenever it deems necessary. That has been the practice throughout independent India. However, when the minority Congress-I Government headed by P.V Narasimha Rao took office the Opposition parties allowed it to be formed and permitted it to function without opting for division in the Lower House of Parliament precisely because none was prepared to face a third election within the brief span of eighteen months. There was considerable strength in the argument that the country with a badly battered economy could not afford the luxury of once again going to the poll, an enormously expensive exercise.

This time the situation was indeed different An articulate section of the Opposition—the National Front-Left combine—was convinced that the Narasimha Rao Government had adopted steps that amounted to bartering away the country's sovereignty. The pre-Budget developments, which resulted in the Union Finance Minister being forced to table in Parliament his correspondence with the World Bank and the Fund-Bank conditionalities, were sufficient proof of the role the foreign financial institutions had played in influencing policy-decisions including the framing of the Budget proposals. Both the Prime Minister and the Finance Minister had to concede the main burden of the NF-Left charge: the government had accepted the conditionalities of the World Bank. Their assertion that they did not accede to any condition militating against national interest is a matter of opinion. Nevertheless, without debating on the government's contention it is more than transparent that the NF-Left members were not raising trivial issues in opposing the government, regardless of the position of the BJP which, on more than one occasion on the floor of both the Houses, revealed its over-eagerness to save the Narasimha Rao Ministry.

The Prime Minister's claim that he had consulted the Opposition parties in June was limited to the need of getting the IMF loan and not the acceptance of the World Bank conditionalities which his Finance Minister did behind the back of all parties in November

Hence the key issue was one of conditionalities imposed by the World Bank in particular, as raised by the NF-Left In effect the government was on the defensive on account of the firm NF-Left stand on the point. Eventually in the face of mounting pressure the Prime Minister declared that any advice to scrap the public distribution system and do way with the food subsidy would be rejected. This is the net gain of the NF-Left campaign: the government has been bound to such an assurance. This is not of minor importance.

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However, while the government gets upset over the charge that the nation's sovereignty has been placed in jeopardy, how can it explain the South Block's strange behaviour with regard to Cuba? What was its attitude towards the Cuban Foreign Minister when he came to India recently? And what about the non-implementation of the promise regarding adequate supply of rice to Cuba? Were these not dictated by the consideration that Washington should not be annoyed? Are they not related to the invisible conditionalities of the World Bank? The nation awaits a categoric response from Narasimha Rao. Because any obstacle to independent decision-making is a sign of infringement of a nation's sovereignty.

March 11 S C.

COMMENTARY

Let Parliament Debate Nuclear Issue

N.C.

While the national scene is dominated to an extraordinary degree by the political fall-out of the new economic policy initiated by the Finance Minister, it is surprising that an issue of grave implications for the nation's security and sovereignty has not yet been taken up in Parliament nor initiated for widespread national debate. This is the question of the nuclear non-proliferation.

For the past several years this has become an obsession with the US policy-makers—keeping up a relentless campaign insisting on India signing the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT) This pressure has mounted ten-fold with the end of the Cold War and the consequent collapse of the Soviet Union Although Washington disclaimed the idea of *Pax Americana*, in actual practice it has been trying to establish its military hegemony over the rest of the world. The Gulf war was meant to be the curtain-raiser for such hegemony, and sine then Washington has been pursuing with single-minded fixation to assert its military authority, as could be seen in the alerting of the US navy to intercept a North Korean ship carrying Scud missiles for Iran and Syria—which amounts to declaring that nobody, particularly in the Third World, would have the right to any sophisticated military weapons except with the permission and control of the USA.

The latest to proclaim this American hegemony is a Pentagon policy document, scheduled to be released later this month, which lays down the law for the rest of the world Behind sophisticated verbiage, the warning is sharp and clear—that America's mission will be to convince "potential competitors that they need not aspire to a greater role or pursue a more aggressive posture to protect their legitimate interests" With regard to other advanced industrial nations the USA will "discourage them from challenging our leadership or seeking to overturn the established political and economic order" So, there must be no proliferation of nuclear weapons in North Korea, Iraq and the former Soviet republics.

In this blueprint for world hegemony, the Pentagon paper makes a pointed reference to India: "We should discourage Indian hegemonic aspirations over the other states in South Asia and on the Indian Ocean." For this, it says that the USA "may be faced with the question of whether to take military steps to prevent the development or use of weapons of mass destruction." In contrast, the approach to Pakistan is distinctly benign, despite the fact that Pakistan has officially disclosed its preparedness to make the nuclear bomb: "With regard to Pakistan a constructive US-Pakistan military relationship will be an important element in our strategy to promote stable security conditions in Southwest Asia and Central Asia. We should therefore endeavour to build our military relationship given an acceptable resolution of our nuclear concerns."

It is reported that the US Deputy Secretary of State, Lawrence Eagleburger, has clarified to Foreign Secretary Dixit that the Pentagon document should not be taken note of as a serious input into the US policy. It is possible that the Pentagon, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, is in search of an enemy to justify its huge 200 billion dollar budget and therefore conjures up new targets for itself. At the same time, one can hardly underplay the Pentagon paper since it is known to have been prepared in conjunction with the National Security Council and in consultation with President Bush and/or his senior advisers If such a document had come from any other country, we would have naturally called it a blackmail. But nowadays we seem to fight shy of calling an American spade a spade.

In this background, what has been our stand on the nuclear question? When our Prime Minister met President Bush in New York during the special summit session of the UN Security Council on January

(Continued on page 35)

The Price of 'Globalisation'

UPENDRA BAXI

No high practitioner of hermeneutics, deconstruction or new criticism has ever read a budget as a text. But Dr Manmohan Singh's Budget speech warrants such an unusual endeavour, especially as it articulates a new vision of Indian development. The text is as important for what it says and what it does not say; silence as a form of speech is more insidious.

The text is characterised by a remarkable pugnaciousness. It ends with Lincoln's call, "Let the assassin be informed" and Ramprasad Bismil's punch-line: "*dekhna hai jor kitna bazuay katil mein hai.*" What do these dominant figures of assassin and *katil* signify? The no-changers are personifications of assassins; the pro-changers are the heroic figures ready to sacrifice themselves at the altar of change. More subtly, critics become assassins of a new order; criticism becomes a bloodied genre; discussions and debate become a mortal combat, a trial of strength between the forces of good and evil; a new demonology stands inaugurated.

Unbeknown to the author, the rhetoric of the Budget speech, subjected to symptomatic reading, suggests anticipation of violence in forms of counter-speech. And the message is clear: the critic-*katils* will need to be subjugated (to invoke Marx's favourite phrase) first by the force of phrases and if necessary, next by force without phrases.

The text sanitises the endemic violence against the Indian impoverished, who appear as theatrical pauses and not as Indian citizens bloodied and bruised by macro and mega economic practices of planning. The 1700 backward districts for whom half of the Rs 1000-crore National Renewal Fund is proposed populate the text bereft of even a reference to starvation deaths in Kalahandi. One must be grateful for small mercies to Bhopal victims who are spared of taxation on the meagre compensation they may eventually receive, but this redemption from obscenity is not accompanied by any earmarking of resources to implement even the most apologetic suggestions made by the Supreme Court for the eight-year-long relief and rehabilitation effort, as if the *parens patriae* role of the Union Government ends with its felicitation of Union Carbide's frugal charity!

The author is the Vice-Chancellar, University of Delhi.

The recent collective suicides of Andhra Pradesh weavers appear, by indirection, in the bloodless rhetorical pledge to "work out a scheme to upgrade the technology of the handicrafts" which employ millions. While the commitment to poverty alleviation programmes is dutifully articulated, there is not even a passing mention of the reasoned recommendations of India's first-ever National Commission on Rural Labour. The National Renewal Fund outlay of Rs 1000 crores stands dwarfed by the allocation of Rs 17,000 crores to defence and the fertiliser subsidy of Rs 5000 crores. The 'renewal' does not include allocation of resources to redeem the plight of Indian prisons, custodial institutions such as juvenile homes, women's remand homes, psychiatric health-care institutions, the physically disabled, victims of faulty farm equipments, persons displaced by massive public projects, bonded labourers, prostitutes and beggars. All these presumably fall within the hegemony of reduction of fiscal deficit.

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THREE powerful persuasive rhetorical strategies animate the text. First, the critics who say that India's sovereignty is threatened are told: "We must not remain captives of a permanent fear of the East India Company as if nothing has changed for the last 300 years!" Second, the strategy of proselytisation, in myriad ways, of "opening" India to world economy through liberalisation of laws, policy and administration for foreign investment. Third, the text pulsates with strategic evasion: "The House can rest assured that we have enough policy instruments at our disposal to ensure that foreign equity enterprises function in accordance with our national priorities."

The last strategic evasion is a superb rhetorical device. Even as a whole range of policy instruments (controls, quotas, licences, regulation, exchange, control, duties, tariffs, restriction on foreign ownership, dominant governmental control over public section equity) are dismantled with lightening strokes, the House is assured that we have "enough policy instruments" to discipline foreign investors to meet "our national priorities". The embalming ambiguities of the phrase evoke instant endorsement. But these priorities are no longer the old constitutional priorities but new ones. The new national priorities are to avoid marginalisation of India and not lag behind "globalisation".

Those contesting these priorities are made to feel prisoners of a shabby past. Modern multinationals are no colonial buccaneers; international financial institutions do not constitute the Company Bahadur; and globalisation has made sovereignty an obsolete shibboleth to a point that even distinguished economists speak not of diminution of sovereignty but of "externalisation of policy-making"! How do you answer the charge that any criticism of liberalisation arises from the seventeenth century neuroses? Dr Manmohan Singh clearly sets the terms of discourse; either you are anachronistic or you are Utopian. In either case, you have not much to contribute to a reasoned discourse on liberalisation. The "assassin" is anaemic; the *katil* overestimates her strength. Thus it is that the power of the text reinforces the text of power.

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And there is the Kennedy prose: "We shall pay any price, bear any burden, make any sacrifice to realise these dreams." The "dreams" are those of the founding fathers of our republic. But these dreams speak of free and compulsory education for the young under the age of fourteen; distribution of the wealth of the community to foster "common good" and avoid "common detriment"; prevention of destitution of the old and the young; right to work; care for the disabled; legal aid to the poor; welfare of Scheduled Castes, Tribes and depressed classes; worker participation in management; respect for environment; abolition of untouchability, bonded labour, child labour, and trafficking in human beings.

These constitutional dreams become nightmares for those who have to globalise India. The Budget text must convert nightmares into new dreams and represent them as "the dreams of the founding fathers". In fact, the power of the text lies in its summons to us all to become the "founding fathers" of a new republic.

The arch post-modernist, Jean Francois Lyotard, prescribes: destroy all narrative monopolies. The text of the Budget destroys the narrative monopoly of the Constitution only to inscribe in its place that of globalisation. But its seductive power makes us feel that the constitutional metanarrative legitimises globalisation. The presentation of radical discontinuity in Indian politics as the unfoldment of original vision achieves a miracle for the Indian middle-class consciousness. Even the witless post-modernist must applaud this monumental achievement, while the Indian impoverished, yet once again, get reconstituted to "pay any price, bear any burden, make any sacrifice" to realise the "dreams of the founding fathers of our republic". The endless variety of their misery and monotony does not deserve any redemptive text like the Budget. ■

Alienation from Gandhian Ethos

MADHU DANDAVATE

For the first time in the last several years a stormy debate preceded the presentation of the Budget for 1992-93 on the issue of alleged interference by the World Bank and the IMF in budget formulation by India's Finance Minister. Leaving aside the procedural issues involved and the formal connotation of 'budget secrecy', defined by parliamentary scriptures and judging from the content of the Budget and the tenor of the World Bank-IMF conditionalities, it is obvious that there is a clear and direct correspondence between the two, no matter whatever be the learned view of legal pundits and experts of parliamentary procedures.

In this connection it is interesting to remember the encounter that Hugh Dalton, the Chancellor of the Exchequer of the United Kingdom, had with the budget secrecy. Before presenting his budget to the House of Commons on November 12, 1947 he casualy told his journalist friend, who was smoking a cigarette, that he could smoke with ease that day, but it would not be possible for him to do so the next day. Taking a clue from this remark the press correspondent flashed the news in the evening daily, *Star,* that duty on tobacco is expected to go up in the budget. It turned out to be correct and Hugh Dalton resigned from his ministerial office. This happens where norms of public life are based not merely on written rules and their mechanical application but on unwritten conventions.

The Finance Minister while formulating his Budget for 1992-93 had a restricted degree of freedom because of the structural adjustments he had already introduced in the economy earlier and the conditionalities the World Bank had prescribed as a basis for Structural Adjustment Loan (SAL) for India.

The Finance Minister's approach was again inhibited by the World Bank-IMF cross-conditionality which meant that no loan would be available to India from the IMF unless it complied with the conditionalities prescribed by the World Bank, and similarly no credit facilities would be available to India from the World Bank unless the IMF's conditions were adhered to. This 'take it or leave it' attitude of the World Bank and the IMF deterred the Finance Minister from taking independent initiatives and using options. He had to conform to the broad policy programmes offered by the multilateral financial institutions.

The author was the Finance Minister of India in the National Front Government (1989-90).

◆

THE Finance Minister's Budget strategy gives primacy to tiding over the balance of payments crisis and augmenting the foreign exchange reserves. However, in his anxiety and enthusiasm, he has placed sole reliance on borrowings from the World Bank and the IMF. Little has he realised that heavy borrowings from these institutions may relieve the BoP crisis temporarily but meeting the liabilities of these long-term loans would create a worse crisis in the long run. In this context it is worthwhile to remember that by March 31, 1991, India's aggregate external debt was Rs 1,30,700 crores—almost 25 per cent of the country's GDP. The projection of interest payments on external and internal borrowings in the 1992-93 Budget is Rs 32,000 crores as against Rs 27,450 crores in the 1991-92 Budget. This is a burden partly on the foreign exchange reserves and partly on indigenous rupee resources.

When double-digit inflation has been reached, the most pressing problem of India's economy is to bring down the rate of inflation. One of the factors that contributes to inflation is rise in non-Plan expenditure which is mostly non-productive. This expenditure is continually on the increase. In the 1992-93 Budget its projection is Rs 84,475 crores against Rs 79,697 crores in the 1991-92 Budget. The main components of the non-Plan expenditure are defence expenditure, subsidies and servicing of internal and external loans. Since the expenditure on defence, subsidies and servicing of external debts and internal borrowings had gone up the non-Plan expenditure had increased. This exerted an inflationary pressure on the economy.

To reduce the expenditure on interest payments on internal and external borrowings, it is necessary to invoke Article 292 of the Constitution which gives enabling power to Parliament to put suitable ceiling on all borrowings. If this is done the emphasis of the government would shift from reckless borrowing to indigenous resource mobilisation through higher taxation on the rich, firm steps to unearth black money and augmenting of exports. Though there is a growing consensus on invoking Article 292 of the Constitution for putting a ceiling on borrowings, the Finance Minister has refused to make any commitment on this issue.

Decline in production and impairment of growth in industrial and agricultural fields contribute greatly to inflation. In the Budget the Plan size for 1992-93 has been Rs 48,407 crores. In nominal terms this is higher by Rs 5438 crores than the 1991-92 outlay of Rs 42,969 crores. However, in real terms, accounting for double-digit inflation, the Plan investment has been reduced.

In 1992-93, capital expenditure will increase only by 0.2 per cent while revenue expenditure will go up by seven per cent. In 1991-92 there was a seven per cent cut in the Plan expenditure and 20 per cent increase after making the necessary adjustment for inflation. Thus if we take two years together there is no appreciable increase in the Plan spending. In reality, there would be a modest decline. All these factors lead to the unavoidable conclusion that the growth rate would be slowed down and there would be increase in the rate of inflation.

From fresh excise duty about Rs 2000 crores will be raised mostly across the board and this too will contribute to cost-push inflation.

With a gap of 24 million tonnes between the indigenous production of crude oil and petroleum products and their consumption demand, more than 20 million tonnes are to be imported from the Gulf countries. After the recent devaluation of the rupee by more than 20 per cent, as an integral part of structural adjustments, the import bill of crude oil and petroleum products went up considerably and ultimately that will result in increase in freight rates and further rise in inflation.

Under these circumstances there is an imperative need to have as much shift from conventional to non-conventional forms of energy like solar energy and biogas. Besides, in the transport sector of Railways phasing out steam traction followed by reduction of diesel traction and its replacement by electric traction is very necessary. This would conserve fuel and reduce pollution. The Budget ought to have taken a long-term view and provided more allocations for offshore and onshore oil exploration so as to reduce our oil imports and conserve our foreign exchange reserves. However, the sole reliance seems to be on borrowings from the World Bank and the IMF. Ever since we experienced the first oil shock, reorientation of energy policy was called for. But unfortunately this task has remained undone.

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THE Finance Minister has taken credit for reducing the overall budgetary deficit from Rs 7719 crores to Rs 5389 crores. However, this decline is illusory. The low budgetary deficit has been obtained by combining the increased revenue deficit of Rs 13,882 crores with the capital surplus of Rs 8493 crores for 1992-93 mopped up through high borrowings. Reducing the overall budgetary deficit by stepping up external and internal borrowings might be a good mathematical exercise but it is not a correct index of good financial performance.

In the 1992-93 Budget the Central Plan outlay for rural development has been scaled down to Rs 2610 crores from Rs 2702 crores in 1991-92. Similarly, the Central Plan outlay for irrigation and flood control has been brought down from Rs 267 crores in 1991-92 to Rs 231 crores in 1992-93. These reductions will be counter-productive from the point of view of agricultural production and will adversely affect the inflationary situation besides aggravating the problem of rural unemployment.

The policy regarding multinationals is also going to be harmful to rural development whose base is the small-scale industry. The budgetary policies give no evidence of the Finance Minister's awareness of the need to prevent uneven and destructive competition between the decentralised small-scale sector on one hand and on the other multinationals which are equipped with advanced technology and abundance of capital. In the event of such a competition the small-scale sector would be destroyed and the problem of unemployment would be aggravated. In the midst of the euphoria for elitist growth the interests of decentralised industries are ignored to a great extent in the Finance Minister's budgetary perspective. That will destroy the very basis of the employment-oriented Eighth Plan to the detriment of the rural sector.

Despite all denials by the Finance Minister, the development model envisaged in the 1992-93 Budget is the one prescribed for the developing countries by the World Bank and the IMF. Wherever this model has been worked out under the glorified slogans of globalisation and liberalisation, it has inevitably resulted in greater indebtedness, elitist growth without distributive justice, economic disparities and social tensions, erosion of real incomes of rural masses and assurance of protected markets for the developed countries through imports and capital-intensive industrialisation and partial or total removal of non-tariff barriers.

Despite the Finance Minister's rhetoric of tribute to Gandhiji in his Budget speech the pattern of development pursued by him amounts to total alienation from the ethos which Gandhiji created during the freedom struggle. Restoration of that ethos consistent with the demands of the modern age is the need of the hour. ■

(Courtesy: *Indian Express*)

Super-Rich spared Burden of Adjustment

DEEPAK NAYYAR

The presentation of the Union Budget has been received in the media by an applause that borders on euphoria. This is not surprising. The benefits would accrue to those who are vocal or articulate: the rich and the influential. The costs would be borne by those who are silent or not heard: the poor and the underprivileged.

It is important to redress the balance and situate the Budget in a wider socio-economic perspective.

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HOW is the burden of adjustment distributed between different classes in, or segments of, society? The caricature answer that appears to emerge from the Budget is: make life comfortable for the rich and leave the poor to take care of themselves.

The structural reform in the system of direct taxes abounds in concessions for the rich. The changes in the realm of indirect taxes are likely to be both inflationary and regressive, which can only hurt the poor.

The emphasis on, and the pattern of, expenditure adjustment is such that it would make the poor more vulnerable to, rather than protect them from, the burdens of macro-economic adjustment.

In the sphere of income tax, the exemption limit has been raised and tax rates have been lowered. Thus the present slender base for direct taxes would be narrowed further. What is more, the average rate of tax (income tax as a proportion of gross income), already low, may decline further.

In a country of 850 million people, where the middle class is estimated to number at least 50 million, if not 100 million, the number of income tax assessees is in the range of six million.

Given these magnitudes, it is not surprising that, as a multiple of per capita income, the exemption limit for income tax in India is among the highest when compared with other countries, including those in the developing world.

The author, till recently the Chief Economic Advisor to the Union Finance Ministry, is a Professor at the, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

This exemption limit of Rs 22,000 (more than four times our per capita income) has been raised to Rs 28,000 (more than five times our per capita income). Consequently, about one million persons would simply drop out of the tax net.

The across-the-board reduction in income tax rates, other things being equal, would reduce the average rates of tax. Consider, for example, a person with a gross total income of Rs 1,35,000.

Under the erstwhile regime, a standard deduction of Rs 12,000, under Section 16, a maximum possible deduction of Rs 13,000 under Section 80L and a deduction of Rs 10,000 under Section 80 CCA or 80 CCB, taken together, would reduce taxable income to Rs 1,00,000. The present tax liability of such a person, inclusive of surcharge, would be Rs 30,912 and the average rate of tax works out at 23 per cent.

Under the new system, this person would lose the benefit of deductions under Section 80L, 80 CCA and 80 CCB, but would be eligible for a tax rebate on savings of Rs 10,000 (in 80 CCA or 80 CCB schemes) under Section 88. The tax liability of such a person, inclusive of surcharge, would now be Rs 29,792 so that the average rate of tax would be lower at 22 per cent.

In the sphere of wealth tax, all financial assets have been exempted from tax, the exemption limit for taxable wealth has been trebled from Rs 5 lakh to Rs 15 lakh, and the tax rate has been halved from two per cent to one per cent.

The number of wealth tax assessees, at present, is in the range of 0.6 million, of which only 0.1 million have an assessable wealth of more than Rs 10 lakh. Even this miniscule number would now be reduced by a large proportion.

The super-rich, obviously, deserve to be spared the burdens of adjustment!

If the objective is to create incentives for the accumulation of wealth, a view now in fashion, surely the principle of equity between generations calls for the simultaneous introduction of an estate duty or an inheritance tax as in Japan or Europe. There is no mention of it whatsoever.

The Budget estimates for income revenue in the next financial year, which imply additional resource mobilisation despite massive concessions, must be based, at least in part, on the Laffer proposition that lower tax rates lead to higher revenue yields.

◆

THERE is little, if any, evidence in support of this proposition for India. It can materialise if and only if it is associated with improved tax compliance and better tax enforcement. The signals sent out in the Budget are just the opposite.

The provision for tax deducted at source, in respect of interest on term deposits with commercial banks and commission payments, has been withdrawn. This is an important method of enforcing tax compliance and taxing undeclared incomes, adopted in most countries, and it has been abandoned without reason.

Similarly, there is yet another amnesty, associated with the Gold Bond, for the benefit of persons with undeclared incomes and undeclared assets. Apart from no questions asked about source, such bonds will be exempt from income tax, wealth tax and gift tax.

In sum, the changes in the system of direct taxes do not simply undermine the equity principle. They are also not conducive to tax compliance on the part of those who have the capacity to pay but also the ability to evade.

In the sphere of indirect taxes, the Union Budget has reduced customs duties across the board, which would mean more than Rs 2700 crores in gross revenue foregone and a net loss of about Rs 2000 crores.

This is sought to be compensated, in part, by massive resource mobilisation through excise duties. In terms of gross revenue yield, the new levies add up to more than Rs 2500 crores (Rs 2210 crores net of concessions).

This is large when compared with similar efforts in the past and with the estimate of revenue from excise duties at existing rates of taxation (Rs 30,000 crores).

Such additional resource mobilisation is bound to accentuate inflation. The most serious cause for concern in this context is that the special excise duty has been raised from 10 per cent to 15 per cent of the basic excise duty (with an estimated revenue gain of Rs 1025 crores) for the whole range of commodities but for specified exceptions.

Interestingly enough, some consumer durables rank at par with a few essential commodities in being exempted from the higher levy! This will, almost certainly, accentuate inflationary pressures and expectations, as the retail trade would mark up prices by more than the amount of the special excise duty without necessarily observing the sanctity of exemptions.

The substantial reduction in customs duties on capital goods and manufactured intermediates may not reduce costs of production, hence prices of final goods, for two reasons.

First, prices are rigid in downward movements. Second, the partial convertibility of the rupee may lead to a market premium on the official exchange rate which could mop up the tariff reduction.

So much for revenue. What about expenditure?

The Budget appears to have chosen a soft option in fiscal adjustment insofar as it squeezes government expenditure in the social sectors. In the revised estimates for the current financial year, for instance, expenditure overruns elsewhere have been offset by a cut of Rs 1345 crores in the Budget support for the Central Plan outlay. Of this, as much as Rs 750 crores is at the expense of the approved allocation for rural development and the social sectors.

The story is the same for the Budget estimates of 1992-93. The Central Plan outlay for rural development and the social sectors, taken together, is Rs 7738 crores as compared with Rs 7659 crores this year. Given the rate of inflation, this implies a significant decline in real terms.

There is also a discernible decline in this provision for social sectors as a proportion of macro-economic aggregates, whether Central Plan outlay, total Central Government expenditure, or the projected GDP in the next financial year. This pattern of expenditure adjustment can only add to, rather than minimise, the burden on the poor.

◆

IT is clear that the substantial fiscal adjustment implicit in the Budget should have come from a more appropriate mix of expenditure cuts and revenue-raising, instead of relying excessively on the former.

In a period when we are imposing a substantial burden on the poor through expenditure adjustment, the equity principle demands that the rich in particular, and the non-poor in general, share in this burden through their contribution to direct taxes.

For this, it was absolutely essential to broaden the base for direct taxes so that a larger number of people are brought into the tax net and to deepen the structure of direct taxation by increasing the average rates of tax.

The Union Budget for 1992-93 appears to have done just the opposite. ■

No Escape from Fund-Bank Supervision

SWAMINATHAN S. ANKLESARIA AIYAR

The row in Parliament over conditions attached to the World Bank and IMF loans makes sensible people rub their eyes in disbelief. Messrs Chandra Shekhar, V.P. Singh and Co. were among the guilty men who made India bankrupt through reckless mismanagement. Yet these gentlemen now have the gall to point accusing fingers at Dr Manmohan Singh, the man who has the unenviable job of repairing the damage they have caused. The world must be laughing at the spectacle.

No doubt it is a terrible thing that India has to submit its fiscal, trade, industrial and other economic policies to the World Bank and the IMF for approval in order to get badly needed loans. It is another matter that these policies are generally sensible ones that have been recommended by eminent Indian economists for decades, and should have been adopted long ago. No matter how good or necessary the new policies may be, it is nevertheless humiliating to be in thrall to the World Bank and the IMF in this fashion. The long, detailed list of conditions India has accepted shows that India is being treated like an irresponsible schoolboy that cannot be trusted to behave sensibly and must be supervised closely. Unfortunately a series of Indian leaders have behaved like irresponsible schoolboys and made the country bust.

The three dishonourable schoolboys are our three previous Prime Ministers—Rajiv Gandhi, V.P. Singh and Chandra Shekhar, who constantly put politicking above economic management despite warning signals aplenty. Rajiv Gandhi started the borrowing spree, internally and externally, that led to the government constantly living beyond its means. Under him deficit financing touched new records. Then came V.P. Singh, who was so busy with Mandal, Mandir and Meham that he ignored money supply, and deficit financing balooned still further. The Left parties were partners in crime with him in the farm loan waiver and its expansion, which set the exchequer on course for bankruptcy.

◆

WHEN V.P. Singh fell there was an urgent need for a fresh election to bring in a government that could tackle the economic crisis. But Rajiv Gandhi preferred to put this off, and instead found a partner in Chandra Shekhar. This gentleman, who had for decades declared that it was a matter of principle to oppose the Gandhi family, and who was willing to join hands even with V.P. Singh (whom he hated) in order to topple Rajiv, emerged as the biggest opportunist of all. Not only did he join hands with Rajiv to come to power, he continued the overspending bonanza while running an administration that soon acquired a reputation for venality and corruption. He negotiated two loans with the IMF (despite claiming to hate it). When ousted, he was in the process of negotiating an upper tranche loan from the IMF, which would have necessitated a Structural Adjustment Loan from the World Bank too, with all its conditions. Had he remained in power a little longer, he would have swallowed all the Bank-IMF conditions in order to stay in power. If he is bleated about dishonourable conditions today, it is a cry for his vanished power, not principles.

He says the country should not have discussed its budget and trade policies with the World Bank and the IMF. Unfortunately, Chandrashekhar has contributed to the mess that makes such action necessary. India is now unable to service its foreign debt. To do so, it needs around three billion dollars a year for three years till its exports pick up, and no foreign bankers are willing to make loans of this magnitude. If India defaults on its debt, it will be cut off from all international credit. That will mean a huge fall in all imports including oil, edible oil, fertilisers and grain. It will mean inflation of up to 100 per cent, a breakdown of all road transport and food riots. It is to avoid default that Dr Manmohan Singh has been forced to go to the IMF and the World Bank. Judging by their rhetoric, Chandra Shekhar, V.P. Singh and Co. would probably prefer India to go bust. Having been irresponsible in power, they are now irresponsible in opposition.

◆

WHEN countries go to the IMF and the World Bank for policy loans after having proved themselves incompetent, they have to submit themselves to detailed supervision. Since countries like India go bust because they have lousy budgetary and trade

(Continued on page 17)

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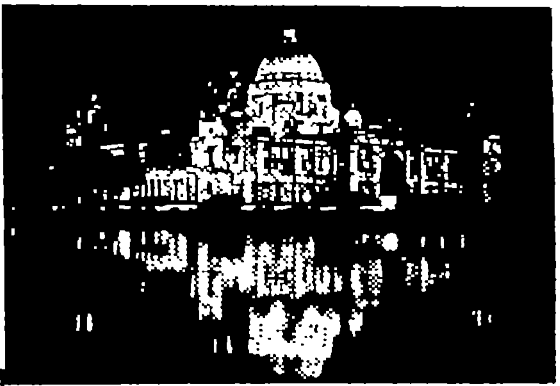

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Fatalistic Dependence on Foreign Crutches

BALRAJ MEHTA

The Union Finance Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, has delineated in his speech presenting the Union Budget for 1992-93 a three-year-phased programme for the structural adjustment of the Indian economy. He has woven into his presentation a series of myths which do not relate even remotely to Indian reality.

He has claimed great success in bringing the fiscal deficit of the government down to 6.5 per cent of the GDP and has proposed to bring it further down to 5.0 per cent of the GDP in the coming year. But dressing up the budgetary sums by passing off market borrowings from the government to public sector undertakings and selling of the equity of these undertakings plus extraction of larger surpluses from them for raising revenue for current consumption of the government do not add up to the restoration of even the budgetary balance, let alone the macro-economic balance in the economy.

The fact is that the revenue deficit of the Union Government grew in the current year by over Rs 3000 crores compared to the budget estimates and there has been an increase in the net RBI credit to the Union Government of over Rs 1000 crores. This too happened when drastic cuts were made in capital expenditure on the development of infrastructure and mass welfare. The resources raised ostensibly for development purposes continued to be merrily diverted to meet non-development expenditure of the government which is reflected in a lower overall budgetary deficit in the current year by as much as Rs 10,000 crores compared to the yawning revenue deficit.

It is not at all surprising that with cost push factors, among them the upward revision of administered prices and the baneful influence of the high revenue deficit, inflationary pressures could not be brought under control. So far as the balance of payments problem is concerned, without exports rising and piling up of more foreign debt including high-cost deposits of non-resident Indians, a good part by way of the inflow of hot money in response to the special amnesty scheme, the build-up of the exchange reserves has not eased the balance of payments crunch even if it may have deferred imminent default in international payments. But for severe import compression, the position would still have been critical.

It is, therefore, with much apprehension that the move in the next year's budget to liberalise imports and disguise devaluation of the rupee by way of its partial convertibility with 60 per cent of the exchange earnings in the trade account depreciating (which is estimated to be not less than 15 per cent compared to the official exchange rate of the rupee), must be closely and critically watched. Will there be soon a slide-back to a precarious balance of payments position? This issue must not be facilely skirted in the fond hope that generous IMF and World Bank credits and direct foreign investment would flow in to buttress India's balance of payments position.

◆

IT is the growing and fatalistically accepted, even applauded, dependence on foreign crutches which has pushed India into a situation where it has to let foreign creditors dictate their terms. Dr Manmohan Singh admitted as much when he said in his Budget speech that the "extent of conditionality (imposed by the lenders) depends on the amount and type of assistance sought". What has been revealed about conditionalities under the loan arrangements already made and more being negotiated is that they are not confined to the capacity to repay criterion but have spilled over into the determination and enforcement of the entire gamut of economic policies of the government as well as even strategic and political arrangements which palpably undermine India's sovereignty.

It is in this background that the so-called medium-term objective to place the economy back on the path of high and sustainable growth for which the budget for the coming year is supposed to be designed needs to be viewed. There is no sign yet on the horizon that the Indian economy is poised for returning to the path of high growth. On the contrary, it is stuck in the mire of stagflation. The deceleration in the growth of the GDP to as low as 2.5 per cent as against the assumption of 4.0 per cent growth, with inflation rate of 9 per cent in the current year's budget has turned out to be illusory.

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More disconcerting is the fact that while the industrial sector has recorded a negative growth rate and agriculture has suffered a setback, the services sector has forged ahead with a growth rate of more than 5.0 per cent.

The idea that slashing of customs duty in spite of the large loss of revenue—as much as Rs 2500 crores—will bring in inputs for stepping up industrial production and open the door for the entry of foreign capital, goods and services will boost investment is facile and misplaced. The trade-off between cuts in customs duty and increase, almost across the board, in excise duties, together with adjustments in direct taxes entailing further loss of revenue collections, in particular from the thin top-high income, wealthy segment in a society of mass poverty, is misconceived. The upshot will be that while inflationary pressure will remain strong and impulses for healthy growth within the economy remain arrested, foreign capital will come in a highly selective manner, directly or under collaboration arrangements with Indian comprador business interests, to establish its strategic hegemony in the Indian economy. It will enjoy a competitive edge in the Indian market to maximise returns from enlarged investment and trading opportunities.

Was Dr Manmohan Singh being just facetious when he promised a "pattern of production which is labour-intensive and generates large employment opportunities" as the longer-term objective to be realised in the third and final phase of the operation of the structural adjustment programme? This is pulling the wool over the eyes of the desperate and growing numbers of the unemployed and under-employed in the country when reliance is being placed entirely on the injection of capital and labour-saving latest technology from abroad, in the name of modernisation and international competitiveness of India's production, trade and services sectors. The so-called "exit" policy is a euphemism for the closure of production units and retrenchment of workers as the starting point in that direction. The so-called market-friendly production pattern is explicitly designed to subserve effective demand in the domestic market as well as generate surpluses for export in order to earn foreign exchange for liberalised imports to satisfy the same demand. All this has no relevance for the mass of the poor and deprived and is of interest for the top crust of hardly 20 per cent of the population with purchasing power enough to provide a market for the pattern of production which is being evolved. The Budget for 1992-93 seeks to move in this direction in a desperate hurry. ■

Import of Economic Policies Liberalised

D.P. BHATIA

The economic policies, forced or adopted in India by the present government, reveal a clear acceptance of the capitalist system and globalisation of the Indian economy. From the 1992-93 Budget, it further appears that with the pace we are heading towards globalisation, we will soon enjoy not only the luxuries of foreign goods and culture but of imported policies and thinking. Then we need not trouble ourselves with thinking about our future or the type of society we want to have. It will be decided by the computer imported or indigeneously manufactured with imported chips.

It is a matter of pride that some persons have already started talking about dropping the constitutional amendment made to incorporate the term "socialistic pattern of society" in the Preamble of our Constitution by the late Indira Gandhi. Given this trend, the future of our society can be easily visualised. In view of these developments, the 1992-93 Budget proposals have to be viewed from the angle of some fundamental issues instead of meticulously calculating the rate of inflation, etc.

II

THE experience of the past eight months has made the Finance Minister wise enough and consequently he has tailored the Budget which is lesser prone to criticism specially from those who have the effective voice. The potential critics include those belonging to the business class. Therefore, sufficient provision has been made to please them. Inflation indexing of capital gains and equating the private sector's mutual funds with the public sector are some of the safety nets. The jubilation of the share market within hours of the Budget presentation reveals the enthusiastic reception to the 1992-93 Budget from the capitalist class.

However, the attempt made to pacify the service class by raising the income tax limit by about Rs 6000 may prove to be a futile attempt. Resentment over this step has already been expressed by many. This rise is certainly very meagre when considered in the light of the price rise last year and what is expected this year. The Finance Minister has also withdrawn the facilities for savings under 80L, 80CC(A), etc. Consequently, the net gain to the lower salary class will be negligible and some others may have to pay a higher tax. It would have been a more judicious step if, as in the case of indexing capital gains, the salary received would also have carried inflation indexing for the purpose of income tax limit. On the other hand, the withdrawal of these saving facilities are expected to have an adverse affect on savings in the economy.

The 1992-93 Budget, nevertheless, substantially by benefits the Indian importers or, if viewed from the other side, the foreign exporters. The maximum customs duty which was slashed to 250 per cent just a few months back has been further reduced to 110 per cent in the 1992-93 Budget. Thus, there is a reduction of 140 percentage points in less than two years. The duty on capital goods, has been reduced to 50 per cent. Besides slashing duties, imports, except of a few sensitive items, have been liberalised. Now of the total earnings, either by exports of goods and services or factor income, only 40 per cent is to be surrendered at the official rate, and the remaining 60 per cent may be used or sold at the market rate. Whatever may be the arguments, a decline in the value of the rupee in terms of other currencies has to be defined as devaluation and this is what the partial convertibility has done to the rupee through the backdoor. The exim script carried a premium of about 25-30 per cent and the market rate will adjust to this.

III

LIBERALISING imports and making the rupee partially convertible fulfill the binding conditionalities of the Fund-Bank. For getting the loan these conditionalities—whether contained in the FM's letter or the agreement with the Fund-Bank—had to be fulfilled. The Left-Front and National Front are perhaps betraying an over-reaction in charging the Finance Minister with the leakage of the budget secrets or the Chellia Committee report to the Fund-Bank. No person at that high level will commit this mistake. At the same time one cannot keep one's eyes closed from the economic intelligence being done in India. Foreign powers, if they are interested in manipulating some policy recommendations of a committee or elsewhere or to know about the policies, will put their own person there. Thus one can only say that conditions have been created or allowed to develop in a way in which it has become easier for these forces to keep surveillance and manipulate the economic policies in India.

With the liberalisation on the external sector in the 1992-93 Budget the inflow of foreign goods will rise. Imports of capital goods rise very likely to be of outdated technology, if India is fortunate not to get scrap material. In this case India's own technological development will suffer. Still the inflow of consumer goods will substantially increase. The Finance Minister admitted that at present the industrialised countries are undergoing recession. Therefore, India provides a good market for their goods. This, however, will have an adverse impact on India's own industries, specially for those which fail to withstand foreign competition. In fact, in globalisation only the competitive units will survive. Therefore, with the closure of units in the domestic sector, substantial unemployment is not ruled out. Here one may recall Mahatma Gandhi's *swadeshi* movement in 1931. During his visit to London, Gandhi was asked by Lord Irwin to give up his boycott of foreign goods for three months. To this he replied:

> I could not give it up three minutes. You have three million unemployed, but we have nearly three hundred million unemployed for half the year. Your average unemployment dole is 70 shillings. Our average income is 7 shillings and six pence a month.

The only difference between 1931 and 1991 is that at that time we were under British rule and we are now under the Fund-Bank tutelage. Therefore, we need a strong *swadeshi* movement again.

IV

THE efficiency criteria which has been made the basis for retrenching the staff and closing down the units, appears to have been forgotten while preparing the Budget for 1992-93. No tax incentive or any other encouragement is provided in the Budget for achieving efficiency or running a unit at full capacity.

The 1992-93 Budget has also missed both the problems of stagnation in the current year and rising unemployment.

A cut is likely to adversely affect the demand of the domestic private sector. In the Budget no provision is made for the additional DA payment. If another 20 per cent is shifted from buying goods for DA payment, the demand from industries will be adversely affected.

Further, under some given conditions, a budgetary deficit of five per cent of the GDP means that if the GDP at constant prices rises by five per cent the price rise, will be zero. In case one expects a five per cent price rise the growth in the GDP will be nil and any further rise of prices will amount to a negative growth in the GDP. To some extent shortage in effective demand may be met either by black money coming into the economy which perhaps the government expects or due to a rise in the velocity of money circulation. In view of this, during 1992-93 the GDP growth rate will be below three per cent.

Whereas the FM has repeatedly stated that the prices will be controlled by controlling the fiscal deficit, he is evasive about withdrawing subsidies and not increasing the controlled prices. It is expected that the controlled prices, as in 1991-1992, may be raised. In this respect one looks back at the Railway Budget, fares for both the lower class and upper class have been increased by 15-20 per cent. (The Railway Minister cleverly avoided stating the percentage rise in the lower class fair which for the ordinary Second Class is worked out at more than 30 per cent at the lowest point and about 10 per cent at the highest point.) Then effective rise in freight is worked out at about 10 per cent.

About the withdrawal of fertiliser subsidies nothing is clear and if withdrawn it will lead to price rise for the agricultural commodities In the Ministry of Education, an exercise is being done to withdraw the subsidies on NCERT books. Prices of LPG and some other products during the year are likely to rise. Thus the controlled prices when charged on the market pricing basis, are likely to go up. In fact the WPI having shown a small decline, has already started looking up.

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NEXT to unemployment, it is price rise in wage goods which most severely effects the poor class. But the misfortune of the poor is that he is blind, deaf and dumb. He is blind because due to his illiteracy and poverty he cannot see the changes taking place around him. His only god is his bread. He is dumb because either he does not speak or whatever he speaks, the foreign-returned elitist does not hear his voice. This foreign returned elitist, on the other hand, has an electronic media and also influences the other media for beating his own drum at the maximum volume. The elitist not only influences but manipulates the policies to suit his requirements.

To conclude, it has been correctly observed that at the time of garnering the benefits, the elitist class benefits the most, whereas at the time of sacrifice, it is the common man who is made to sacrifice the maximum. ■

Retrograde, Anti-National

N. BHATTACHARYYA

For the first time in the parliamentary history of our country all the Opposition parties expressed serious apprehensions that the Central Budget for 1992-93 had the prior approval of our creditors—the IMF and the World Bank. This does not perturb the Leader of the Lower House in the world's largest democracy. In any other democracy the person responsible for such a gross misconduct is not allowed to remain in the Cabinet. But not so here. Nevertheless, the undeniable fact is that he has created doubts in the minds of the ordinary people about his bonafides!

In the early seventies, Indira Gandhi promised *'Garibi Hatao'* but worked wholeheartedly for the rich. Her son Rajiv Gandhi campaigned for consumerism and brought in screw driver technology to develop consumer durables. The result is an ever-increasing foreign debt because of which our creditor countries through their pet organisations are dictating our internal and external economic policies. The multilateral financial institutions are now closely monitoring the entire range of these policies. At the same time, the Budget for 1992-93 is a continuation of the policies framed in the previous Budget presented by Prof Manmohan Singh in July 1991. That Budget too was the product of intense consultations with the Fund-Bank.

The Finance Minister promised the IMF that Budget deficit would be 6.5 per cent of the GDP and now he claims to have achieved it. For the foreign exchange earners he made arrangements for its dual pricing and allowed them to earn profit on foreign exchange earning. Devaluation has now been turned into a perpetual phenomenon. For the big cultivators the government will increase the fertiliser subsidy from Rs 4800 crores in 1991-92 to Rs 7000 crores in 1992-93. But when subsidy on foodgrains is to be provided, the Centre refuses to increase it beyond Rs 2750 crores in 1992-93 as against Rs 2850 crores in 1991-92. The prices of foodgrains in the public distribution system have increased tremendously, so much so that they are beyond the reach of the common man. And yet the quality of goods supplied in these shops are unfit for human consumption even in the metropolitan towns, One can thus well imagine their quality in the distant villages. It is surprising that the World Bank has no multinational organisation to replace our public sector organisation—the Food Corporation of India.

To implement the decision of the IMF and the World Bank both the private sector and the government are preparing a foolproof plan of massive retrenchment in the organised sector. Some compensation may be paid out of the so-called National Renewal Fund. But what is amazing is the total absence of anxiety among the policy-makers in Delhi to contain inflation. If deficit spending was the cause of inflation, why did the government fail to reduce rate of inflation from 20 per cent for the common man to the promised nine per cent in the last Budget? In the USA, Germany and Japan the rate of inflation is between three to five per cent. The largest section of our workers lives in the villages. The concept of minimum wage of Rs 20 per day was recently agreed upon at a meeting presided over by the Prime Minister; but this becomes meaningless against the phenomenal rise in inflation. The Finance Minister forgets that in 1989-90 the actual expenditure on rural development was Rs 2637 crores and after adjusting with the growing inflation he provides in next year's Budget only Rs 2610 crores for this purpose. But look at his generosity while computing capital gain tax. The cost of property will be decided after adjustment with the inflation rate and thus the taxable liability will be minimum.

The Congress-I has no option but to follow the directive of the multinationals. They (the US multis) cannot sell their products in their own country. Bush went to Japan to beg a share of the Japanese market, he returned empty handed. They have friends like P.V Narashimha Rao who wants to sell the Indian people to these international exploiters. The import duty will be gradually withdrawn and those multinationals will dump India with these outdated technology. The country will be losing around Rs 2023 crores in customs duty and in future this loss will be more. This does not mean

The author teaches Economics at Motilal Nehru College, University of Delhi.

that India will be importing machines for heavy and basic industries so that the country becomes economically sound and self-reliant. Rather, machines are to be imported for providing cold drinks, potato chips and various products where the initial investment is very low; but the Indian elite is mad after them. The Indian businessmen supporting the policies of liberalisation are now afraid that these multinationals will convert them into conventional commission agents as they had been during the British days. The BJP and the RSS feel that the government should withdraw from economic matters and concentrate only on law and order. Now they are worried that at the rate the NRIs and multinationals are purchasing shares in well-known Indian undertakings the days of the Tatas and Birlas are coming to an end: That is why the *Swadeshi Jagaran Abhiyan* by the stalwarts of the BJP and the RSS!

Adhocism is the other name of our fiscal policy. The government has opened the floodgates for the MNCs and the private sector is fully exploiting a market of 840 million people. The scope of speculative income is increasing everyday. The crowd in the stock exchanges is expanding. But the Finance Minister refuses to collect taxes from this growing rich community in India. The rich people are getting richer everyday but they will pay less by way of income tax and expenditure tax. One is surprised that instead of abolishing the provisions of the wealth tax and the capital gain tax, the government is unwilling to collect any tax because they are paid by the rich. So when there is acute scarcity of resources with the Centre and the States and the rich can afford to pay the amount stipulated, the share of direct taxes to total tax revenue is still less than 20 per cent.

On the other hand, the share of indirect taxes to total tax revenue has increased to more than 80 per cent and in this Budget an additional revenue of Rs 2516 crores is proposed to be collected from excise duty. The World Bank sympathisers in our Finance Ministry forecast last year a nine per cent rate of inflation; but the actual inflation is 20 per cent. With additional doses of indirect taxes, increase in railway freight, decontrol of steel and enhancement of the prices of coal and transport cost, the prices will zoom further but our pundits in the Finance Ministry promise only a six per cent increase in prices next year. Such is the degree of disinformation campaign, because our people are illiterate and simple.

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THE government has allowed the private sector to offer any amount of interest on debenture and company deposits. Now both the Private and Public Sector Mutual Funds will compete to attract savings in the economy. Conventional saving schemes run by the government are least attractive and the State Governments are suffering for paucity of funds as they used to get a share of this national savings as loan. In this Budget the government claims to have transferred Rs 1064 crores to the States as their share of additional tax, and the Centre will keep only Rs 188 crores. But even the Provident Fund interest is much below the market rate of interest and thus there is erosion in the value of the only source of savings of millions of salary and wage earners. Our government is eager to rehabilitate the foreign moneybags; it has no time to think of its own people. They are being asked to wait for another three years!

Last year our Finance Minister threatened the accumulators of black money with dire consequences unless they came out with full disclosures. He announced two schemes to offer opportunity to convert black money into white money. In the first scheme, to deposit money with the National Housing Bank, the government collected only Rs 106 crores. Under the other scheme, The Remittances in Foreign Exchange (Immunities) Scheme, 1991, the government collected by February 10, 1992, $766 million. This clearly proves that our politician-businessman-bureaucracy nexus is more powerful than any state authority. In this Budget our learned Professor and World Bank trained team have nothing to offer as follow-up action for this miserable failure to unearth black money. His proposal to collect around Rs 1400 per annum from ordinary retailers will give the dishonest tax officials a new opportunity to harass honest small retailers.

The gap through which the so-called structural reform measures were thrust upon India by the agents of the developed countries was provided by our deteriorating BoP situation. Dramatic devaluation in two instalments in July 1991 and import compression measures were taken to increase Indian exports and improve the BoP position. Due to import compression measures imports in dollar terms during the first six months (April-September 1991) declined by 17.5 per cent and exports also declined by six per cent. Now all sorts of imports will flood the Indian economy as we have around Rs 11,000 crores of foreign exchange. But who will purchase the Indian goods? At least not the developed countries as they are passing through massive recession and unemployment. They have already imposed various measures to curtail imports from the developing countries and the Dunkel Report will cause disaster for the economies of the developing countries. Since Chandra Shekhar was made the

Prime Minister by Congress-I, the World Bank was pumping in huge loans and during the period January 1991 and January 1992 the total drawing from the IMF was of 3 billion or Rs 6500 crores. In this way India's total external debt is more than 70 billions which is around 25 per cent of our exports for the service of external debts. The present government is not at all interested in taking India out of such calculate exploitation by the developed countries.

It is by now well-known to all that instead of the developed countries bringing in capital for the development of the developing countries the process is in the reverse direction. The Indian Government has a soft corner for the NRI investments. The recently launched India Development Bonds were offered at one per cent higher interest rate than the internatioanl LIBOR rate. These NRIs are again allowed to bring in gold at a concessional rate and sell it to resident Indians. Though such pampering is done to the NRIs, when the country was indistress they all withdrew their deposit and tried to destroy the country. Why should they not be treated as foreigners for tax purposes?

It is true that the Indian business community never had such an attractive Budget. They are happy due to the partial convertibility of the rupee, import of gold and gold bond scheme, reduction of Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR), removal of the government control pricing of capital issues, simplification and reduction of personal income tax, indexation of cost for purposes of long-term capital gains tax, extension of tax exemption because of the golden handshake with the private sector, avoidance of double taxation for the partnership firms, removal of wealth tax on productive assets, abolition of excise licensing, exemption of mutual funds from income tax, reduction of duties on capital goods as well as maximum rate of customs tariff and withdrawal of tax deduction at source on bank deposits.

This happiness of the Indian and foreign business houses is expected to usher in a 'second industrial and agricultural revolution'. And in this second industrial revolution there will be massive retrenchment even in the government offices. A microscopic population of 10 to 15 per cent of the population will enjoy the fruits of development while the dreams of millions of freedomfighters to bring economic independence will be shattered. This happened long back in Latin America and Africa and after 40 years of independence this government has displayed a boldness to chart the same course. This kind of recklessness of the state is nothing but bringing back dictatorship through the back door. Like all dictators, this government too is shedding crocodile tears to remove 'want and exploitation' from this country by handing over its economc management to the outsiders who have only one interest, that is, to suck the vitality and energy of this vast landmass of huge potential of untapped resources.

The agenda before the nation is to oppose with determination such anti-national policies of the Centre. Accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few is highly dangerous for any democratic country. Public sector organisations worked as a buffer against the exploitation of the unorganised poor. Now the policies to gradually liquidate such units must be stopped. The Left and Opposition parties have a responsibility to educate the people, because the media is on the side of the multinationals. Narasimha Rao claims that he is a wise man and he expected not to preside over a government which will be virtually controlled by the international moneylenders by the end of this century. The writing on the wall is quite unambiguous and one can ignore it at one's period. ■

SWAMINATHAN: Fund-Bank Supervision

(Continued from page 9)

policies, these are necessarily areas where many conditions will be imposed. The country faces a Hobson's choice. It can suffer the humiliation and distress of default. Alternatively, it can suffer humiliation of a policy loan. Almost all countries choose the latter because it offers the hope of revival and prosperity after a difficult period of adjustment.

India faces the same dilemma. One alternative is to listen to the wreckers of the economy, and so ensure that the wreckage is complete. The other alternative is to go for policy-based loans from the IMF and the World Bank, using the services of people like Dr Manmohan Singh to ensure that the policies are turned to the national interest to the maximum extent possible. The second alternative is clearly preferable. Instead of beating our breasts about Bank-Fund conditions, we need to resolve that we will never again mismanage our affairs so badly that we have to go abroad with a begging bowl in this manner.

The synthetic moral outrage of the wreckers is astonishing. We have an ancient feudal tradition in India, where important people make a mess, and then the *bhangi* who comes to clean up the mess is kicked and reviled. This is what is happening today, and it makes us a laughing stock in the world. We need instead to revile those who brought us to such a sorry pass—Rajiv Gandhi, V.P. Singh and Chandra Shekhar. ■

(Courtesy: *The Times of India*)

MARCHING AHEAD FOR PROSPERITY TO FARMERS THROUGH COOPERATION

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DELTA D

Of Egypt, India and Central Asia

AMRIK SINGH

Reading books is somewhat unfashionable nowadays, I suppose. Fiddling with electronic gadgets is what is fashionable. But being a member of that generation which in some cases has not even learnt to handle electronic gadgets, reading of books is what comes naturally to most of us. In any case one is not too sure that this neglect of the written word represents a basic shift of attitudes or is a passing phase.

Whatever it be, looking back over the year 1991, when I review what I read, three books stand out. Two of them represented my discovery of Neguib Mehfooz, the Egyptian novelist, who was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1988. I stumbled upon one of his novel *Palace Walk* and was deeply impressed by his insight into human nature and his skill in depicting it. The only other book of his that I have been able to lay hands on so far is *The Beginning and the End.*

Reading Mehfooz has been a stimulating experience. The man knows how to tell a story and has an extraordinary sense of the rhythm of events. He also knows how to control the pace of narration, how to complicate the plot and how to unravel it at the right moment and with the right degree of impact. In terms of craft, he should rank with some of the masters in the world of fiction.

Reading him was an exhilarating experience. I had a somewhat similar experience with D.H. Lawrence decades ago. I read his *The Rainbow* and *Woman in Love* at one go. The world of complex and contradictory emotions that he unveiled for me was fascinating. Since I read Lawrence, no one else had impressed me so deeply as Mehfooz has done. So many other people I read during the last few decades made good reading and one was impressed with their talent and performance but they did not give me a peep into a new world. Much earlier I had read Dostoevsky and other masters and it should not be necessary to recall the impact of those great minds.

What moved me in particular about Mehfooz was that he was writing about a kind of society which was not dissimilar from ours. In Egyptian society, men and women live in two different worlds and there is very little mixing of the sexes. What he was writing about had such an uncanny similarity with our own situation that I felt that here was a man who was speaking to my inner core. There is so much more that I can write about Mefooz but then I would like to read more of him before I choose to analyse the range and quality of his literary achievement.

The author, a distinguished educationist, is a former Vice-Chancellor of the Punjabi University and the author of several books on education. He is also the long-time Editor of the Indian Book Chronicle.

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ANOTHER book that I have read recently has impressed me for another reason. This is a biography of Genghis Khan by Michel Hoang. The book was originally written in French in 1988 and was translated into English in 1990. This 323-page book makes impressive reading. Years ago I had read a biography of Genghis Khan by someone else. It left me with the feelings that here was an extraordinary person and one should know more about him.

Even before I read that biography of Genghis Khan, I had read something about the history of Russia. What had baffled and fascinated me about the emergence of that country was the manner in which the nomads from Central Asia had swooped into the vast wilderness of that country time and again and how it was after centuries of repeated incursions that Ivan the Terrible was able to stop them.

The entire history of that period in Russia or of any other country was a succession of one battle after another. Today it appears that all that people were doing in those days was to fight one another. (Of course this is not true but this is how it comes across.) Some did it more successfully than others and established their supremacy. A few years later, somebody else came up and disrupted the temporarily stable rule that had been set up in consequence of his predecessor's victory. Some of the Russian films that I had seen had reinforced this feeling strongly.

Even in our own country, except for a few transient periods, all that one reads about is how one tribal leader collected a band of followers, attacked someone else who controlled a particular territory, either got defeated or drove him out and occupied the territory himself and so on and so forth. In other words, history, as one reads it is country after country, was nothing but a series of battles and fights and ruthless killing and rape and plunder.

When one thinks of all that, it seems reasonable to say that though killing in the last two World Wars had been colossal, since the emergence of nuclear terror, things are beginning to change. Local wars have been there and some of them have been quite destructive. But with the amounts of destruction that modern technology is capable of inflicting upon mankind, mutual slaughter and destruction are likely to come down in scale. This may be looking too far ahead but one cannot get away from some such thoughts.

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TO come back to Genghis Khan, however, there was also another reason why I felt fascinated by this man. In a sense one is fascinated by the exploits of all great conquerers, whether it be Alexander or Julius Caesar or Napoleon or anyone else. But there was something unique about Genghis Khan and that is what excited me.

Even before his emergence in the thirteenth century AD, indeed a thousand years earlier, Attila, the Hun, who had also come from those very parts of Central Asia had dealt a fatal blow to the Roman empire. It was decaying in any case. What he had done was to give it the final blow. After that the Roman empire never recovered and soon thereafter disintegrated.

That was not the end of the impact of those who came from Central Asia. They continued to disrupt settled civilisations all around them. Europe at that time was almost barbaric but the same could not be said of China or of the Middle East or Iran or of India. People from this region penetrated into these different parts of the world and turned things upside down. In order to deal with the nomads from the north, the Chinese had built the Great Wall some 2000 years ago. To some extent they did protect themselves against unexpected raids but not in all cases and certainly not when there was a regular invasion as by Genghis Khan.

There must have been something unique about the Mongols and people of that region because, amongst other things, it is also said that the Aryans who came into India also came from that part of the world. There are people who dispute this theory and perhaps the truth would never be known. But of this there is no doubt that Central Asia which was the home of nomads has been sending out wave after wave of invaders to different parts of the world, and with all kinds of unexpected consequences. Extending from the Pacific shore through Manchuria into the heart of Europe and as deep down South as Iran, Afghanistan and India, the Mongols penetrated far and wide. The remarkable nineteenth century discovery that Sanskrit, Persian and several of the European languages were descended from the same source spurred the imagination of scholars. How all this happened is not known. But the impact of this discovery over the centuries has been unmistakeable.

There are all kinds of questions that arise. How is it that these nomads were able to invade and occupy large parts of Asia and Europe and seize and control vast stretches of territory which has few parallels in history? In the course of his victorious career, for instance, Genghis Khan went as far as 8000 kms from his home territory. The only means of transport available then was the horse. The Mongols were superb horsemen without question and so much of their effectiveness depended upon how they reared and managed the horses and other animals.

That their social structure was tribal in character and they seldom had a settled home does not have to be underlined. They lived a nomadic existence and moved from area to area, sometimes in search of food and sometimes because they had never known what is called a settled kind of existence. In history a kind of antagonism has always existed between nomads and the sedentary people; and it is invariably those who settle down that contribute to the emergence and growth of civilisations. Nowhere is this contradiction better typified than in the case of those who inhabited Central Asia. That Mongolia today is nowhere in the world reckoning and has virtually receded into obscurity adds yet another ironic twist to the situation. All these things had fascinated me and when I stumbled upon this book I read it with an unusual degree of interest.

This is not the place to go into the details of what Genghis Khan did and how he conquered vast stretches of territory and practised a strategy of systematic intimidation and terror. Wherever he conquered, whether it was Samarkand or Bokhara or even Beijing, the first thing that he did was to slaughter people systematically and ruthlessly. All civil life was disrupted after that. If it was a country which had evolved a system of local irrigation and its prosperity depended upon that, the Mongols invariably destroyed that system. As to loot and plunder, there was no end. At one point in his book, Hoang describes Genghis Khan's strategy of pre-emptive terror as no different from that which led to the dropping of atomic bombs on Japanese cities

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SEVERAL theories have been advanced in regard to what led the Mongols to venture into other countries. One of them is interesting and is derived from the study of the climate of Central Asia thousands of years ago. The Australian National University, Canberra has in hand a project for preparing a climatic atlas of the whole of Asia for the last 10,000 years. The project has been in progress for about two decades. When completed, it is likely to throw light on some of these complex issues.

According to one theory, there was a prolonged drought in Mongolia quite some time before the beginning of the Christian era. It is that which led to the migration of people to Europe and to Iran and India. In India they are known as the Aryans. Elsewhere they are known by other names. It is all so puzzling and fascinating.

Another theory is that about a thousand years ago, because of the change of climate, there was an unusual growth of steppe vegetation. This led to enormous multiplication of cattle and enabled the Mongols to have thousands upon thousands of horses and in consequence an extraordinarily efficient cavalry. Unlike most other nations, the Mongols relied exclusively upon cavalry attacks. They had hardly anything like an infantry regiment. After all, they were operating most of the time at a distance of several thousand kilometres away from their home. All that would not have been possible but for the exceptionally efficient animal power that they had at their disposal.

Is it possible to understand Indian history without knowing something about what was happening thousands of miles to the north of India? One look at the map of Asia and it becomes clear that those living in Central Asia could not go up North. It was cold there and the only option available to them was to move South. More or less invariably they poured into China, into Asiatic Russia, into Iran, Afghanistan and into India. There was no question of going beyond India because at the end of the sub-continent there was the barrier of the sea.

All movements of population were therefore uni-directional. People came into India and seldom went out. A few of them did; to what is called Greater India, for instance. People of Indian origin have gone to countries like Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia and so on. There have been hardly any cases where Indians have crossed the northern passes and gone into countries up North. It is said about the European gypsies that they originally hail from India and went to Europe after the advent of Islam into the sub-continent. Some of their social customs as also the language that they speak is close to some of the Indian languages but little more is known beyond that. In any case, the point that is sought to be made is that the traffic has been into India and seldom in the opposite direction. Evidently, the geographic situation of India played a decisive role.

A very substantial number of other people living in the north of India and even in areas like Gujarat, Maharashtra are supposed to be descendants of people who came from Central Asia at one stage or another. We have had Greeks, Huns, Scythians, Bacterians, Iranians, Afghans and so many others coming to India and settling down here. Would it be too much to say that, as a melting pot, India is not only unique, in terms of scale and complexity, it is perhaps the biggest in size as well as the capacity to absorb.

While books of Indian history do make references to some of these things, and there are many more details that can be referred to, the fact remains that they do not take enough notice of the ethnography of the Indian population. One can read any number of books of history and remain unaware of what went into the making of a large number of people in India. Should that be so? This biography of Genghis Khan made me feel that one needs to know a lot more about Central Asia in order to be able to understand contemporary India. ■

Autonomy for the Planning Commission

J.D. SETHI

The Planning Commission's autonomy has become a great imperative for planning today as is the need for revamping its structure and functions. If these changes are not introduced, the Planning Commission would face two contradictory pressures. The first would be for its dismantling and giving up planning itself. The other would be in the direction of the so-called routine step-up, of continued expansion and legitimisation of wastefulness of the government expenditure in the name of reaching commanding heights. We already have two sets of ideologues lined up behind these contradictory propositions.

Besides, the inertia in the government and the pressures from the bureaucracy and the elephantine structure of the Commission itself may resist any move towards autonomy because such an autonomy will break the inner bureaucracy nexus. As such the Commission cannot but certainly erode, if not sabotage, the government's new economic policy in managing the macro balances. A drastic change is thus overdue.

Demanding autonomy for the Planning Commission today may seem ironic when viewed in the historical context. When the Planning Commission was constituted in 1950, the then Finance Minister resigned in protest because the Commission, in his view, would not only have excessive autonomy but would be a kind of body parallel to the Cabinet. It would make extra-constitutional intrusion in government functioning, he felt.

The high profile of the Commission during the Nehru phase created excessive national confidence. But the Commission lost its credibility after Nehru's death not only because its autonomy was violated explicitly but also because its models of development failed as was revealed by the poverty and inequality statistics. The revelation came very early in 1960 but Nehru proved too insensitive and arrogant to allow modification or reformulation of the strategy of development. Shastri had no idea what to do with the Commission. Between Indira and Rajiv, the Commission was reduced to a bureaucratic arm of the government.

It is not often realised that Nehru's policy of creating the public sector was not entirely based on economic considerations. Being a Fabian socialist he was afraid of the power of business and that is why he did not mind clamping on the country an inefficient public sector and crippling regulations on the private sector. If economic rationality was an important criterion for planning, then the public sector had to fulfil the condition that it performed only as a business proposition and not as a political venture. It had to produce surpluses. Social and other considerations could not be loaded on it while performing. They could have come later. But political interference and corruption swamped it and the Commission went on pouring resources into unproductive schemes. This cannot go on any more and for this the Commission needs freedom from governmental anarchy and arrogance.

The Administrative Reforms Commission went into the operation of the Commission but it produced nothing worthwhile that had a bearing on its efficiency, accountability and autonomy. Some valuable procedural changes were suggested. Those were later accepted by the government in principle but never implemented. Since those recommendations were accepted by the government in principle, somebody owes an explanation to the nation as to why they were not implemented.

Two men who made the loudest noises about institutional autonomy did not care too much for it when it came to the Planning Commission. Both openly worked for Indira Gandhi who did maximum to destroy every institution. Ashok Mehta and C. Subramaniam, both distinguished and knowledgeable politicians who guided the Commission in difficult times, added their own distortions through utter subservience to Indira Gandhi.

Few people outside it even know what the real functions of the Planning Commission are and how they were arrived at or how the differences between the government and the Commission are sorted out. Whatever rationality remained was thrown to the winds by Rajiv Gandhi. A member of the Planning Commission said in 1986: "The whole struggle within the Planning Commission has

The author, a noted economist, is a former Member of the Planning Commission.

been in recent months, and probably over a year and a half, to make this Plan something effective, something in which the credibility of planning might be re-established. Actually we are not living in an era of planning as we once did in this country in the fifties and the early sixties."

Because of two factors—one fiscal and the other administrative—readjustments in allocations took place and neither radical rhetoric nor economic rationality could influence them. During the eighties the revenue surplus of both the Central and the State Governments turned into revenue deficit and capital resources had to be diverted to meet these deficits. This was in addition to what was considered as feasible or non-inflationary deficit financing. The Planning Commission never pulled up the governments for their letting the Plan financing go haywire and thus wrecking the fiscal system by exceeding too much the limits of deficits agreed upon at the beginning of each Five Year Plan and for the sectoral failure to generate their own resources. Not once did the Commission refuse to finance the failed public sector undertakings. Consequently, the public sector investment which varied from 50 to 60 per cent went on merrily. Whereas the Plan investment in the public sector was kept higher than that provided for the private sector, in actual practice the public sector investments always fell short of what was planned, and thus led to larger and larger budgetary support.

On the question of resource mobilisation by private and public sectors, the Commission totally surrendered to the government's pressures. The resources belonged to the common pool and their allocation was a different kind of function from that of mobilisation. It was a great mistake on the part of the Commission to believe that just because the government had a fiscal monopoly, its resource mobilisation really determined the optimum size of the project identification of the entrepreneurs, no matter to which sector they belonged and their coming together to produce a kind of enterprise, which optimised the use of all the available resources.

Although many planning policies were wrongly conceived, they might have succeeded if the political and bureaucratic vested interests were stopped from undermining economic decisions. Now there is no chance of returning to what was conceived in the beginning. No sector can be made to acquire commanding heights. Indeed, the idea of commanding heights has turned out to be a perverse backdoor manipulation to enable the predominance of politics over economics. That does not mean that the public sector should be dismantled. It means that the size of the public sector should not be politically determined. For that the Commission needs full autonomy. Commanding heights cannot substitute functional autonomy.

The tie-up between the Planning Commission bureaucracy and that of the rest of the government lay at the root of economic mismanagement and excessive regulations. No liberalisation policy can succeed so long as this conspiracy is not broken. The political elite has failed to realise that all its attempts to liberalise and deregulate are producing limited results because of the obstructions and negative attitude of the bureaucracy. The Planning Commission is left with no policy-frame, no priority, no objective; except the semblance of all these.

A structure which was created for imposing and running controls and regulations has no other job to do. Therefore, it must either sabotage or be sabotaged and drastically trimmed. The government should either dismantle the unnecessary part of the bureaucracy—emphasis on dismantling and not reforming—or face failure. The slogan should be minimum government and maximum plan, whether private or public, market or non-market. In fact, the public sector cannot expand nor function effectively unless the redundant part of each Ministry is dismantled in order to improve efficiency. This will automatically reduce the burden on the Commission and draft made on it, paving the way for its autonomy. All this may be too easily said than done but then one must realise that India has no soft options.

Without giving constitutional status to the Commission, there would be neither autonomy nor reform. By virtue of its being a constitutional body, the Commission could become truly accountable to Parliament. Only experts should be its permanent members.

Indira Gandhi reduced the National Development Council, the national political overseer, into a rubber-stamping body. It created the illusion that the States were involved in topmost decision-making. This body should be abolished and its functions be looked after by the Inter-State Council, particularly in view of the fact that no Central Minister, other than the Ministers of Finance and Planning, have ever shown any interest in the deliberations of the NDC. Once the Commission becomes statutory, it does not need another formal statutory body like the NDC. Structurally, a constitutional body can be accountable to Parliament.

In view of the new economic policies of liberalisation, privatisation and relaxation of external controls as well as the extreme shortage of funds, it is necessary that the role of the Planning Commission be reformulated. Instead of overloading it with too many objectives and in view of the shortage of resources which starve almost every sector, the functions of the Commission should be reduced in order to let it optimise its activities.

The Planning Commission cannot be allowed to continue the way it has tried to manage the development strategy for the last four decades, as it has become a dangerous instrument for the government's wastefulness and planned anarchy. Besides, it has become an instrument with a mindset of no-change and status quo. That is why it has failed to resolve a single major issue of controversy about the strategy of development. If the Planning Commission is given autonomy and everything else remains the same, even this exercise would not be futile, it will become free from governmental pressures. Therefore, the first requirement is to define its new role and function in the context of the past experience, changed situation, new challenges and new economic policies of the Rao-Manmohan team.

Pranab Mukherjee has talked about the shift from the current approach towards indicative planning but he has not spelled out this shift at all and thus created confusion or cynicism. It is amazing that the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission should talk in terms of slogans.

Besides the fact that no one in the Planning Commission has seriously analysed the French system of indicative planning and its relevance for us, opting for it as a quickfix substitute for the current planning would mean the end of planning itself. Even indicative planning cannot do without same scheme of rolling plan built into it. Let us first introduce the latter and by experience arrive at a relevant kind of planning.

There are several options before the government to change the character and functions of the Planning Commission so that when made autonomous, it can do its job effectively. We cannot discuss all of them in this article. But for the success of the new policy, it should be expected that the Central Ministries will have limited power and authority. As a result, power will be devolved, either to the States or to the private sector, the major activity of these Central Ministries in respect of hardware developments would be confined to infrastructure and these functions given to the respective Ministries which can do the job individually or jointly. The Planning Commission can concern itself only with monitoring and ensuring macro balances in respect of the areas demarcated for the Central Ministries.

It has become a great imperative to find out countervailing strategy to moderate the negative and partial aspects of the new economic policies. After all, the new economic policies have little or nothing for the 700 million people, even if it succeeds. If they fail, the damage would be incalculable. Therefore, to make the new policies a success and at minimum cost to the people, the Planning Commission should concentrate on creating countervailing strategies which can only be in the field of employment, anti-poverty programmes and social development, once the planning of hardwares has been taken away from it.

The Planning Commission anyway does not possess the expertise to go into the projects in detail although there is a project evaluation division. Ultimately, the Commission sets up working groups whose recommendations it often violates.

The relation between the Planning Commission and the States will have also to be rearranged. There can be no genuine autonomy for the Central Planning Commission if such autonomy is not ensured for the State Planning Boards which so far have been the most useless outgrowth. As a part of restructuring of the planning mechanism in India, the State Planning Boards should be strengthened and given the same authority as is given to the Planning Commission. Indeed, the Planning Commission should interact only with the State Planning Boards as an exercise between two equals which are autonomous.

The only step taken so far to moderate the influence of the new economic policies is the enlargement of the public distribution system to which the Prime Minister has shown a strong commitment. However necessary its role in helping the poor, the PDS is not income or employment generating. Without the masses getting income and employment, the economic crisis will deepen and the society get more divided alongside rampant violence. Therefore, the Planning Commission should be asked to put all its energies and resources in employment generation and social development and ensuring balances within the infrastructure. The problem of fiscal balances should be left to the Ministry of Finance.

These issues cannot be decided *a priori* and should be given considerable thought before any decision is taken. What is important is that the Planning Commission is not loaded with too many functions and priorities or else it will collapse under its own weight and remain subservient to the fancies of the bureaucrats and politicians. The Planning Commission's autonomy has become a necessary condition for having any rational, planned economic development in the coming decades. ■

"Unidentified" Naxalites

G.S. BHARGAVA

Revisiting some of the northern areas of Telengana in Andhra Pradesh I have found that there is a perceptible change in the mood of the people in the last four years. They look cowed down. Our Telugu trait of standing up to what is perceived as injustice is overladen by sullenness and a tendency to suspect strangers. It needed a lot of coaxing to make people talk and, that too with reservations. In short, there is a widespread feeling of being helpless pawns in a ding-dong battle of death between the Naxalites and the police.

This is an apparent upshot of degeneration of the Naxalite movement into sporadic acts of group terrorism on the one hand, and the police strategy of indiscriminate retaliation in kind of the other. The people are caught in the nutcracker. A somewhat trivial incident illustrates the situation. My host, a reporter in Warangal, and I were going in a borrowed car to a village in the north of the district, where I wanted to get the feel of an "encounter" in the last week of December.

Seeing a police vehicle coming in the opposite direction, the driver stopped the car by the roadside and we got down. They may like to find out who we are and where we are going, the colleague explained. But the police jeep speeded past drowning us in a cloud of dust and not caring to find out about it. There is no known face among them; apparently, they are not the local police, may be the BSF or the Indo-Tibetan Border Force, my friend remarked as we resumed our journey.

"What would have happened if we had not stopped," I voiced my curiosity. They could fire at us, the driver replied. Later, I asked the district Superintendent of Police whether there were any instances of vehicle-bound Naxalites attacking the police necessitating the precaution we had taken. He confirmed that there were no such instances and that the Naxalite technique was to move about on foot and stage stealthy attacks. Vehemently denying that the police were prone to fire at moving vehicles, he began to rationalise. "The roads are narrow, you see. It is safe for one of the vehicles to stop."

Finding me unconvinced, he tried a different, perhaps more truthful, tack: "The BSF are new to the area. They do not know how the Naxalites operate and so there can be accidents."

I wonder how the BSF has gone into action without even being aware of the methods of operation of the "enemy". At the same time, the police officer was insistent that there were no BSF personnel deployed in the area. The conclusion is thus obvious that the people are scared of speeding police vehicles, whoever be their occupants and avoid crossing their path.

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THERE was an "encounter" last December in Mukdumpuram village of Warangal in which four "unidentified" Naxalites were killed and their bodies hastily cremated after a formal inquest and post-mortem. I was keen to find out what really happened. According to the police version, a BSF contigent which miraculously escaped from an ambush—the jeep stopped a few yards ahead of the booby trap—engaged the fleeing Naxalites and killed four of them. But the mother of one of the victims—they were all in their twenties—would not be restrained by her prudent husband to tell us that there was no encounter and the young men were killed in cold blood.

She claimed that her son and three others were arrested in the village a week earlier, taken to a relatively distant place and then reported killed in an "encounter". A functionary of the civil liberaties committee, confirming the mother's version, mentioned the names of the victims and said an eyewitness to the crime had been whisked away by the police.

Why were the bodies cremated without being handed over to their relatives? The reply of the

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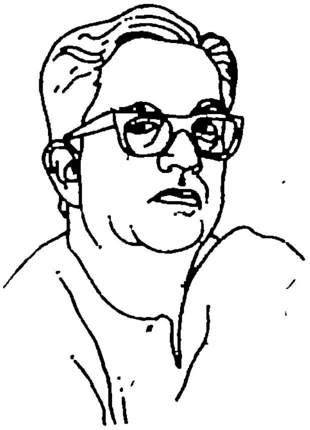

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Station House Officer of the concerned police station—nearly twenty miles away—was that as there were no claimants for the bodies they had been disposed of. Could we see the post-mortem and inquest reports? The file had been sent to Warangal for onward transmission to Hyderabad. He also disputed the identification of the victims by the civil rights functionary and insisted that they were "unidentified". How could they be called Naxalites if they were unidentified? "We know they are Naxalites; otherwise why should they try to blow up a police jeep?"

What happened to the missing youths? The Naxalites might have kidnapped them or they might have joined them without the knowledge of their parents.

In another "encounter"—also in December—in Urukonda village of the same distict two students of Warangal were killed. They were known activists of the pro-Naxalite Radical Students' Union and had been arrested earlier. In their case, luckily, the bodies were returned to their relatives because they were not "unidentified".

According to the civil liberties committee sources, they were taken into custody in Warangal town itself, kept in detention for over ten days and then shot on the outskirts of a remote village. There were no marks of an exchange of fire at the site of the alleged encounter and the young men were supporters and propagators of the Naxalite theories and not activists in the field. The police do not seem to acknowledge the distincion. It is the rule for underground organisations that activists in the field should not expose themselves. It is also unlikely that persons usefully engaged in overt activities will wield firearms and confront the police.

In this context, it seems that the bulk of the victims of the "encounters" are such marginal men and women. Very few hard-core militants have been killed. A plausible theory going the rounds is that unable to lay their hands on the ring leaders the police are waging a war of attrition by eliminating the more accessible urban supporters and others manning the Naxalite front organisations. The idea perhaps is that if the sources of fresh recruits dry up the Naxalite-operators in the jungle will be contained. In effect, however, the police violence is winning public sympathy for the Naxalites even as their support base in the tribal areas and among the poor peasantry is dwindling on account of their cult of the gun. ■

Occupational Health Issues of Women in Bidi Industry

NITYA RAO

Thirty year old Kamlesh lay on a hospital bed, coughing constantly and spitting blood. She was in a critical condition, with doctors having already given her up. She died a few days later.

Kamlesh was a bidi worker, involved in rolling bidis from the age of eight. Her parents were poor and barely managed to survive by rolling bidis. She was married at the age of twenty and had two little children. Her husband, unemployed and himself a wastrel, threw her out of the house as she could bring no dowry.

She rolled bidis day and night to feed herself and her children. The constant exposure to the tobacco dust, added to her general weakness and exhaustion, led to her contracting tuberculosis (TB) a few years ago. She ignored it. She couldn't afford the privilege of treatment and the rest it necessitated. She wasted away and today is no more. This story is commonplace in Jabalpur, Central India, where we worked, and many more Kamlesh's exist even today.

In the single State of Madhya Pradesh, there are an estimated six to ten lakh bidi workers, 80 per cent of them women. By and large, women roll bidis in their own homes, which are *kuccha,* small, poorly lit and with little ventilation. They cook in the same space; children play near them, handling the tobacco and tendu leaf; and the younger ones sleep beside them, all of them inhaling the tobacco dust almost continuously.

The environment in their homes and surroundings, as in other urban slums, is one of dirt and filth, with an additional smattering of tendu leaf cuttings, which attract goats, pigs, flies, etc. Both women and children are thus prone to common ailments like fever and diarrhoea. Their resistance is weakened. The constant exposure to tobacco makes them fall easy victims to bronchial and other chest diseases.

Sevati Bai lives in the slum conditions described above. Her husband does not earn much. She had four children to bring up and so rolls at least 2000 bidis everyday. Her five year old son was constantly sick. Finally when all the tests were done, TB was diagnosed and the treatment started.

The children's health problems are usually attended to, but the woman neglects herself. Her health problems are never highlighted, she works and suffers in the confines of her home, unheard and unattended, until it is often too late. Apart from the general proneness to illnesses, which is also caused by malnutrition and poverty, several occupation-specific health problems are widespread amongst bidi workers, specially TB and other chest diseases.

In addition, a survey of health conditions of women bidi workers conducted in Jabalpur, showed that almost all the women bidi workers questioned, complained of backache and joint pains. The women sit cross-legged or with legs outstretched and keep the raw material on their laps or on the floor beside them. Since most of them roll bidis for at least eight-nine hours a day, posture-related problems are a common features. Having rolled bidis all her life, now at the age of 55, Mumtaz Begum can hardly use her joints. She cannot bend; if she is sitting, she cannot stand without support. Ergonomically, the use of a table and chair, or atleast a small table for keeping the raw materials has been suggested for better posture. This has, however, only been implemented by the Dinesh Bidi Cooperative in Kerala.

Being largely a home-based industry, organised through the "contractor system", who is responsible for any action—the government, manufacturers, contractors, or the women themselves? Infact, a majority of bidi workers are "invisible", not recognised as "workers" involved in a productive activity in society, even in their own homes!

Sixty per cent of the women surveyed reported giddiness and headaches. The main reason appeared to be the exposure to tobacco dust. Thirtysix per cent had eye problems like watering, burning and poor vision. An eye camp was organised, and it was found that of 130 women bindi workers examined, twentyfive per cent genuinely had poor vision. They were advised the use of spectacles. Julekhabi used to constantly complain of headaches. Once she started using her spectacles, in spite of the ridicule she had to face from all her neighbours and relatives, she started feeling much better.

Teja Bai, who was found to have trachoma like many others, was given eye drops and advised to wash her eyes with clean, cold water frequently.

She again is one of those who rolls at least 2000 bidis a day. The problems are genuine but, by and large, unnoticed and unattended.

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THE use of protective masks to eliminate inhalation of tobacco dust has been debated, but so far no suitable design has emerged. A local doctor suggested the use of gauze material, as this would be able to filter out tobacco particles, which would otherwise remain trappped on the mask. However, the women didn't feel comfortable with this, in fact not even with the edge of their sari over their nose and mouth, and preferred to breathe freely.

Fifty to seventy per cent of the women reported gynaecological and related problems including early periods, heavy bleeding during menstruation, urinary problems, leucorrhea and general weakness. Poor nutritional status and repeated pregnancies seem to be the major contributory factors, as fifty per cent of the respondents had a family size of five to seven members, but a monthly family income only between Rs 400 to Rs 800.

Workers do seek symptomatic treatment when their condition becomes unbearable, from both government and private sources. The Ministry of Labour, under the aegis of the Bidi Workers' Welfare Fund, has a special dispensary for bidi workers. They usually give the workers some vitamins and painkillers for their general condition. The long-term solution, however, lies elsewhere.

Over the years, the bidi industry has developed into a highly exploitative one; in fact, thriving on sweated labour. Apart from being paid wages far lower than the Minimum Wages declared by the State Government, the bidi workers are not given sufficient quantities of tobacco and tendu leaf and have to make up for the deficit in production from their own pockets or by purchasing additional raw materials from the contractor. They also have to buy their own thread. In addition, ten per cent of the bidis are rejected arbitrarily by the contractor as being sub-standard and the workers are not paid for it. The same "rejected" bidis are, however, supplied to the manufacturer by the contractor alongwith the good bidis.

The net result is that the workers receive barely half the wage due to them and hence have to work doubly hard to earn enough to run their households, since they are paid on a piece-rate basis. Children from the age of eight to 10 years are involved in this activity, as what they contribute would also add to the household income. Girls are often withdrawn from school after the primary level. Others like 14 year old Tasleem or 17 year old Saroj, who insist on continuing with their education, are made to roll bidis after school hours to cover at least their own educational expenses.

Following the Kerala model of cooperativisation, women bidi workers of Jabalpur, fed up with their plight, organised a cooperative, with the help of SEWA (Self Employed Womens' Association). They decided to function in a centralised workshed, health issues being a major actor in this decision. Apart from being airy and well-ventilated, the women have a limited working day of nine hours. Most of the members have consequently given up rolling bidis at home. Their own homes are thus cleaner, though the neighbourhood is still buzzing with bidi rolling activity, and their children are saved from the constant contact with tobacco.

Apart from this physical improvement in the home and working environment, their symptomatic and chronic problems are constantly monitored and treated by the mobile clinic of the government's special dispensary for bidi workers, which visits the cooperative's premises once or twice a week.

Alongwith providing economic security and independence to the women workers, a determined effort has been made by the cooperative to guide them on preventive medicine, immunization (which service is regularly provided), hygiene, environmental sanitation, better nutrition and balanced diet. Gynaecological problems have been attended to by specialists, who have managed to convince several women and their husbands, especially amongst the Muslim members, to adopt some family planning method. Specialised camps for the detection of TB and eye problems have been held, and suitable follow-up action taken. Reimbursement of the cost of TB drugs, spectacles, maternity benefits, etc. have been secured from the Bidi Welfare Fund.

Working class women normally accord themselves the last place in the family. Their health problems are never highlighted, and they themselves prefer not to spend money on their own health, unless it is absolutely essential. Secondly, women's health problems are normally assumed to be restricted to gynaecological disorders. They, however, also include occupation-specific and general complaints.

The cooperative has provided the women a status and recognition as "workers", both in their families and society. This recognition as major earning members in their families, has made them realise the importance of maintaining their own health in order to continue to generate income for the family. This improved self-image has given them the confidence to highlight their health issues and accord some priority to the improvement in their health status. ■

Central Asia: New Political Implications

SYED ALI MUJTABA

The erstwhile Soviet Union, relegated now to the pages of history, has opened a new 'Great Game' not to be played by the Czar or the Raj, but by the regional actors ready to gain influence in the power vacuum of Central Asia.

Leaving Azerbaijan, which is culturally tied but divided by the Caspian Sea, the five states form a compact geographical entity. Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan dominate the geographical landscape, while Turkmenia, Tajikistan and Kirghizia are smaller in comparison. Given the Slavic composition of the emerging Commonwealth devoid of common currency, the armed forces alienate the Central Asian republics which seek to realise their socio-religious identity outside the sphere of Russian domination. The two leading actors vying for influence amongst the 50 million inhabitants of Central Asia are Iran and Turkey. Pakistan has also appeared on the scene but is playing a side role.

The spectore of the Iranian revolution of 1979 followed by the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and the West-engineered Iraqi attack on Iran, looms large on the psyche of the Western media. It is not comprehended that except for the Shiaite Azerbaijan or the Persian-speaking Tajiks, the predominantly Sunni and Turkish Central Asia have nothing in common with Iran. Even in the days of the Mughals, the Safvids and the Ottomans never saw eye to eye with each other. The proximity to Azerbaijan is not of great significance as Iran nurtures more Azeris in its territory than Azerbaijan. The opening of ethnic cleavages will be detrimental to the territorial integrity of Iran but due to its oil wealth and high degree of industrialisation, Azerbaijan will be sought-after. The low level of strategic importance of Central Asia will allow Iran to manoeuvre its northern borders without significantly jeopardising its recently improved relations with the West. It is true that the moderate Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) is making spectacular headway and religious fervour is getting surcharged, but the Communist-conditioned mind will find it difficult to go the Iranian way.

Turkey, not wishing to see the growth of Iran's influence in the region with which it has its historical ties, has sought to build its own influence. It was quick to recognise and render aid packages to these republics. It backed Azerbaijan's adoption of the Latin alphabet as opposed to the present Cyrillic script in Arabic. The possibilities of the Central Asian republics with their multi-ethnic character becoming a part of the Turkish world due to its secular politics, closeness to the EEC, a Western-oriented approach of development is more probable.

The task which cannot be accomplished by Iran, fence-sitter Pakistan is bidding to seize as its opportunity. It has established ties with Uzbekistan by engineering aid package of 30 million US dollars in credit. With Tashkent Islamabad is discussing economic cooperation and establishing direct air and telephone linkages. Pakistan is also supporting the request of Uzbekistan's President, Islam Karimov, for entry into the Organisation of Islamic Conferences and other international organisations. In an effort to attract foreign investment, Pakistan has been touting itself as a good take-off point to gain entry into the markets of Central Asia. The recent wheeling and dealing with France is a case in point. Since its strategic relevance to the United States has dimmed, Pakistan is set to gravitate towards Central Asia. The Soviet search for warm waters might have been unsuccessful, but Central Asians are expecting to succeed as the Peshawar-backed rebels are tipped to gain a foothold in Kabul. Interestingly, leaders of the Central Asian states are worried on this count; they do not relish the idea of a fundamentalist regime in Afghanistan. Nonetheless, there is a rapid change occurring in the character as well as composition of the republics in Central Asia.

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THERE is a growing trend within the Central Asian republics to work out modalities for regional

The author is a Research Scholar on South Asia, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

cooperation and defence arrangements which in turn trigger off concern in countries like China and the United States. China is apprehensive of a religious fervour gaining ground in its already volatile Xinjiang province and its spin-off in Tibet: China's Xinjiang province has a 50 per cent Muslim population who may find commonalities with the new Central Asian republics. Since the Chinese Vice-President Wang Zhen's visit to the region at the time of the failed coup in the Soviet Union in 1991, there have been minor demonstrations in the Kashgar region, immediately north of India. Likewise, attainment of self-rule may serve to rekindle autonomous moves in Tibet.

The United States has expressed its concern over Khazhakstan joining the club of nuclear powers. The Secretary of State James Baker's visit was to assuage the potential fear of nuclear proliferation amongst the republics of Central Asia. Kazakhstan is the fourth nuclear armed republic of the former Soviet Union and its leader, Nursultan Nazarbayev, is still unclear about retaining its nuclear weapons. If he does, Kazakhstan will become the first Muslim nuclear armed state in the world. In case of the dissolution of the Slavic Commonwealth or the CS not working in the interest of the Central Asian republics, Nazarbayev has discussed the possibility of a Union of Islamic Soviet. This would have a far-reaching consequence in the emerging new world order.

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IT is increasingly difficult for the multi-ethnic Central Asia to resist the pressure of increased autonomy to its ethnic minorities or in any way prevent the impact of these minorities on regional politics. Ethnically, Central Asia is a patchwork of four republics speaking the Turkic language, except the Tajiks. The bone-of-contention between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh is an ethnic irritant. There are border disputes between Uzbekistan and Turkmenia, Tajikstan and Uzbekistan. The Uzbeks have attacked the Meshktian Turks; the Tajiks and the Kirghiz have fought battle over land and water rights. Last year, the battle between the Kirghiz and the Uzbeks in the Fergana Valley left more than two hundred people dead. The fear in all the republics is of a possible domination by a greater Uzbekistan or a nuclear Kazakhstan.

It is evident that ethnic nationalism is taking precedence over other denominators of conformity which may have regional overtones. The greatest impact is going to be felt on Afghanistan which is to witness cracks in its social fabric. Pakistan's spiralling ethnic nationalism articulated by the *jiye Sindh* will have overwhelming bearings on the Baluch and Pakhtoon movements. In India, Punjab and Kashmir are seething cauldrons; while in the north-east, and other parts, sub-nationalism is gradually on the rise.

Central Asia, with such volatile ingredients, is limping on its feet. The power vacuum thus created, attracts regional actors to play an anchor role. But the conspicuous growth of the Right-wing forces of Hindu communalism at home blocks the path of cementing the historical ties with which India is linked to Central Asia. It is only a secular and Centrist India which can encash the far-fetching dividends of the developments in Central Asia. A more tolerant domestic policy will act as a bulwark in gaining the confidence of these republics. India has the resources and the expertise to make its impact but how well it can manoeuvre itself is left to the department of diplomacy which has a testing time ahead. ■

Between Dictatorship and Basic Democracy

ALEXANDER BUZGALIN

The following is the text of an article by Prof Alexander Buzgalin, Organising Secretary of the Party of Labour and a former leader of the now outlawed CPSU's Marxist Platform. It presents a clear perspective of the reform-minded socialists in today's Russia and brings out the similarity of their ideas with Indian socialists. Buzgalin's ideas here are a further enrichment of the views articulated by Boris Kagarlitsky, also of the Party of Labour, in his interview to Mainstream's *Sumit Chakravartty in Moscow (carried in* Mainstream, *January 4, 1992).* —Editor

“Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof...” A professor's salary is enough to buy sausage only as a delicacy, so what then can be said for a worker or a student? Milk is simply non-existent. And all this has continued for more than a year. It is almost impossible, though imperative, to ponder about this life calmly and analytically. Too dangerous are today's hysterics. Too strained is the country. A spark is enough to trigger a revolt. Not a revolution, but a brawl, a slaughter...

Let me start perhaps with a significant fact mentioned by Ken Livingstone in an interview during his visit to Moscow on an invitation from the Party of Labour. Livingstone, a British MP, is the latest Chairman of the Greater London Council, one of the most prominent Labour Left-wingers, and so on, and so forth... He asked: why does your government take its cue from the extreme Right-wing liberals of the Jeffrey Sachs variety? This adviser has already helped Bolivia carry out reforms triggering a 40 per cent production slump, then he achieved nearly the same in Poland, now he has come to you. Why? Isn't the current crisis enough for you? In London, people like Jeffrey Sachs have long since been forbidden to enter 10 Downing Street The era of Right-wing domination (note: by Right-wingers they mean not Communists, but the advocates of Thatcherism or Reaganomics) is drawing to a close...

Step by step, the wise West has been coming to the conclusion that Right-wing liberalism, which triumphed “once and for all” in the 1980s, cannot resolve these problems. It is no longer reasonable, it seems, to go back to the ideas of social-democracy, which did not prove very productive in the 1970s. A new road is needed. A radical solution is now being sought by the movement of the New Left in the West, which has inherited the achievements, but is simultaneously overcoming the mistakes of both orthodox communism and social democracy. The New Left are still small in numbers, but they will probably go the way of other such movements which have already acquired a mass scale and strong influence. For example, the Greens, women, youth, supporters of territorial and production self-management, consumers, and many others.

I am not going to predict an early victory for these forces, yet it is possible to foretell almost certainly that the ruling quarters will borrow (not by virtue of their altruism, but out of survival instincts) much from this New Left's arsenal, adapting it to the tasks of prolonging the life of the old “civilised” society.

Why should we care about their problems? Perhaps it is their present-day problems that can show us our future and save us from having to rehash the ABC's civilisation.

◆

WE are faced with a dilemma: either we survive, moreover, in a dignified way, like people, like individuals, and not like swine—in which case our society must make the leap into the twentyfirst century or else the country takes the path mapped out by Jeffrey Sachs and the Yeltsin-Gaidar tandem which means a deepening of the recession, that is, an inhuman life for the majority of the country's population today, and transition into the category of the poor (and increasingly lagging behind developed nations) Third World nations tomorrow.

And now is the time to pose the pivotal question: how can we secure a strategic breakthrough into the twentyfirst century in our country, devastated as it is by the socio-economic crisis?

Many people in our country long to exercise their talents, but not at the expense of others. There are potentially quite a number of such people in our country, but they have been and continue to be oppressed by the systems which ruled and continue to rule the roost. Previously, they were simply turned into slaves, leaving precious little for the display of initiative; today their initiative is being driven into the channel of small business which in our conditions takes the form of a "shop", equally dependent on the inequities of government clerks and racketeers. Opportunities to set up collective enterprises and vigorous and effective activities by mass public organisations have remained extremely narrow. And most importantly, people have been so tightly squeezed today by the vices of the crisis, and by the need to procure food and clothing, that en masse they don't care about "social creativity".

Will this start a vicious circle? By no means. Indeed, the majority of working people in our country have kept and will continue to keep aloof from independent historical creativity, preferring to pin hopes on the wisdom of the President or steering clear of any social or political issues. They follow the primitive scheme of hired workers: you pay—I work. Who pays and what for, who gets the profit, and how much of it this is none of my business as long as I get decent wages.

Indeed, all this is quite true. But the crisis is mounting and the majority will soon understand beyond a shadow of doubt that they have nobody to hope for except themselves and their comrades: that nobody is going to pay them "decent" wages. The real scheme is to turn them into Europe's cheapest labour source, for only then will business people (domestic as well as foreign) begin investing something in production, not just in brokerage, that is, speculation and profiteering. In this context, the majority of hired labourers would become objectively interested in the implementation of a socio-economic and political programme, being an alternative to the liberal ideas of "shock therapy".

◆

NOW we can discuss the maximum and minimum programmes the Party of Labour has presented to the political scene. The initiative in forming this party was put forward a few months ago not only by political leaders (from the Socialist Party, the Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists, the democratic Marxist-opposition in the CPSU, etc.), but also by the leaders of several trade unions and local Soviets.

First of all, politics (first—because inherent in the point at hand is democracy, an absolutely indispensable condition of any of our party's actions; deliberations on 'enlightened totalitarianism' are not for us). Basic democracy is more than just a traditional set of the principles of parliamentarianism, multi-partisanship and pluralism. It is first and foremost a true government of, by and for the people. This, however, only emerges when democracy grows up from below instead of being foisted from above; when every deputy with an imperative mandate represents a group of people really brought together by common interests: a self-management committee, an association of consumers, trade unions, and the like (incidentally, this principle was the cornerstone of the system of Soviets which sprang up on grassroots initiative but quickly degenerated).

If a political regime is focused on including organised and active hired workers in the solution of the problems of their own lives, it will also be possible to tackle economic problems. Strategically this, I repeat, amounts to support in a mixed economy for an effective public sector possessing strong incentives for increasing the efficiency of production, produced by the worker's position as the master, not the hireling.

Specifically: a demand from the country's Council of Work Collectives that enterprises be transferred to work collectives, not the "director corps" and the ministerial bureaucracy which are rushing to set up "holdings" and "concerns". Will the collectives waste everything, while monopoly and chaos continue holding sway over the economy? Yes, they will—if there is only collective ownership and the market. If, however, these are complemented with a democratically regulated market to bring out strong strategic programmes (as in South Korea or Japan at the time of their "economic miracle"), a policy of employment and personnel retaining controlled by trade unions (as in Sweden for example), and price controls by unions of consumers, producers, etc. under the auspices of local authorities (as in Austria)—there will be different results. This will be a democratic mixed economy, in which the socialist and the civilised bourgeois trends will compete with each other economically.

But this is in the long term. As things stand now, we are in a situation of conflagration and far from having too much. But even in such conditions there are two options. The first—to pin our hopes on a Russian Pinochet. This road is not for us. This road is for those who will tomorrow, realising their inability to extricate the country from crisis, get rid of Yeltsin's powerful figure and put in a "patriot" with democratic slogans and iron fists in the presidential-dictatorial chair.

The second variant—the above-mentioned struggle for transition to basic political democracy and a mixed economy with generous safety nets. On this basis it would become possible to push through rigid deflationary measures and production-stimulating measures—primarily science-intensive technologies within the framework of the former military-industrial complex (one example—the use of our carrier rockets for the commercial launchings of Western satellites could bring our country several billion dollars in net profit). As a matter of fact, the Party of Labour has drafted an anti-crisis programme with the participation of many foreign experts (in the framework of the Economy and Democracy International Symposium). Anyone who so wishes to, may familiarise himself with it, but only privately so far. The powers that be and the press are not going to have it published.

And to close, I do not at all want to wind up my deliberations with promises like those made by new-fangled politicians: you help us come to power and I shall do everything for you as if by magic. Quite the contrary—my colleagues and I are telling you: unite and take the solution of problems bearing on your survival into your own hands. Otherwise the crisis will deepen, meaning that the threat of either civil war or dictatorship will mount. Both of them are monstrous... ■

(Courtesy: *Moscow News*)

South African Whites Still Hate Blacks

HARI SHARAN CHHABRA

Due credit must be given to President F.W. de Klerk of South Africa for removing the pillars of apartheid like the Group Areas Act, the Separate Amenities Act, the Land Acts and the Population Registration Act from the statute book. But it would do well to understand that the removal of apartheid laws has been only on paper. Two years after the release of Nelson Mandela, the socio-economic lot of the Black majority in South Africa has not improved even a little bit. The Whites are still in total control of all power—political, economic and social. Even if the Blacks start sharing power with the Whites in the next two years, the Black population will remain poor and economically exploited.

Moreover, apartheid mentality and psychological barriers created by the abominable system still continue to stalk the country. The fact of the matter is that there is a whole history of hatred between the Blacks and the Whites and nothing would disturb the peace of the Whites more than to have any social contact with the Blacks. It is not only true of the psyche of the extremist Right-wing Whites but also of the so-called liberal Whites. There are, of course, a few exceptions. A very small number of Whites have their hearts at the right place and they are the ones who are forcing the hands of the de Klerk regime to speed up the process of building a new South Africa—non-racial and democratic. They are the ones who see the writing on the wall and who realise that the future of the White minority would be safe, only if there is a just and equitable order for the majority population.

The repeal of Group Areas Act would allow the Blacks to stay in any locality they would like. But for one thing, the Blacks have no money to rent or buy property in exclusive and expensive White areas; and secondly, no White is willing to have a Black "nigger" as his neighbour. If any White dares to favour a Black in this regard, he faces the threat of a social boycott from the entire White community.

Here is a shocking report send to *The Times*, London by Ray Kennedy from Johannesburg on February 2:

> Angry Whites built roadblocks and dug ditches in a green belt area outside Johannesburg at the weekend to stop nearly 1000 Black squatter families being moved within sight and sound of their doorsteps. Some had clubs, pick-axe handles and baseball bats. Most were White householders who fear their tranquil lifestyle is about to be destroyed.

The story is that the Transvaal provincial administration decided to uproot 750 squatter families from a site at Zevenfontein, north-west of Johannesburg, which has no sanitation, running water and other facilities and move them to an area where these can be provided. This was to be an 80-acre site, a dormitory town near Johannesburg, where most of the squatters work. But this Black dormitory town is very close to the White residential area, Bloubosrand, a part of green belt zone, whose wealthy residents live on individual plots of an acre or more. They are objecting to have the Blacks as their neighbours even though they would be only across the road.

The irony is that a few prosperous Indian and Coloured (mixed race) families have moved into Bloubosrand after the Group Areas Act was replealed, but the While residents of the area cannot bear the sight of the Blacks. It sounds ridiculous when these Whites say that having allowed Indians and Coloureds in their residential area, they are not racists. The fact that the Whites prefer lighter-skinned Indians and Coloureds to Blacks makes them exposed to the charge of being totally racist.

The attitude of the White residents of Bloubosrand was strongly criticised by *City Press*, the Black Johannesburg newspaper. In a sarcastic editorial, headlined "Lily-white Liberals Show True Colours", it said:

> As Blacks, we know how lily-white northern Johannesburg operates. They are very liberal. Suddenly Zevenfontein came upon their cosy lives. In one swoop that which for years was hidden within them came out—the real White liberal attitude to Blacks. And we know there are many Zevenfonteins in our country.

◆

CAPE Town is also showing its racial colours. An outbreak of "Kaffir killing" has fuelled racial tensions and alarmed Blacks living near conservative White communities. In three incidents in the new year, 12 people have been killed and 23 injured by White men using pistols or automatic rifles. Most of the victims were Blacks shot at random in streets and shopping centres.

In a bizarre case, with no political motive, Cornelius de Vaal, a 24-year old White, flew into a rage when his girlfriend ended their relationship. "I begged her to come back to me, but she said I must go." With no sign of remorse he said: "This is why I zapped so many Kaffirs." The targeting of innocent Blacks has raised fears of a race war in Cape Town.

The Separate Amenities Act is also gone. But discrimination against the Blacks continues in many ways. Take the question of hundreds of swimming pools in exclusively White residential areas. No Black man or woman is allowed to use these swimming pools. Perhaps the Whites fear that the water will turn black! Schools run by the Whites so far are another field where discrimination exists. These schools are expensive and Blacks cannot afford them but what is more important is the fact that parents' associations controlled by Whites run these schools and they decide who can be admitted. Blacks, even if they are children of millionaries or highly educated parents, are generally kept out. Even a few racially-integrated schools are the victims of bomb attacks by extremist Whites. The only conclusion one can draw from all this is that the Whites still consider the Africans inferior in all respects.

The Land Acts of 1913 and 1936, two most unpopular measures in South Africa, which reserved 87 per cent of the land for the 15 per cent Whites, were removed from the statute book. But it was stipulated by the government that henceforth Blacks will be allowed to buy land from white "owners". It sounds totally absurd and raises two important questions. Do Africans have the money to buy land? Were the Africans paid when the Whites grabbed their land? Since the answer to these questions is in the nagative, it is not a land reform measure at all. Whites are mighty pleased that status quo on the land question will remain and the Africans will continue to remain landless—just the tillers of their land.

Since the Whites are unwilling to give any higher social status to the Blacks and since it is difficult for the two to coexist, de Klerk is finding it hard to go ahead with the plans of building a democratic and non-racial South Africa. He is finding the attitude of Whites most non-cooperative, opposed as they are to give equality of opportunities to the Blacks.

The racial situation in South Africa is pathologically so bad that the Whites are asking for the division of the country, much against the wishes of the African majority. They want a Black South Africa and a White South Africa of five million population. Even the influential Conservative Party is supporting this demand. Buoyed by a recent by-election victory in Orange Free State, the party's leadership has claimed that it would win an (all White) election if one was held now. The extreme Right-wing neo-Nazi paramilitary organisation in South Africa, the AWB, is "to prepare for war" in order to attain its goal of a separate and sovereign "Boer State".

With the meeting of minds of the Whites and the Blacks an impossible job and racial barriers still intact, the future of South Africa is steeped in uncertainty. Zimbabwe and Namibia have to some extent overcome racial barriers, but in South Africa it is not an easy task. It is well to remember that no White "master" will like to serve under a Black "nigger". ■

N.C.: For Nuclear Debate

(Continued from page 2)

31. he reiterated India's long-standing position that the NPT being discriminatory in favour of the nuclear weapon powers, India would not be able to sign it. President Bush is reported to have pressed for India agreeing to the proposal for a five-power conference to include the US, Russia, China, India and Pakistan, to ensure non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in South Asia. This was originally proposed last year by the Pakistan Prime Minister, but since then it is now being officially promoted by the US Administration. On this question, Prime Minister Narasimha Rao agreed to have talks with the USA. In pursuance of that assurance, Foreign Secrtary Dixit has gone to Washington to discuss this urgent matter alongwith other issues of bilateral interest and concern. Meanwhile, the Pakistan Foreign Secretary, Shahriyar Khan, publicly stated in Washington last month that his country had reached the capability to produce a nuclear bomb

There are press reports about the brief that Foreign Secretary Dixit has carried to Washington. It appears that he would press for including within the orbit of such a project not only South Asia but Southern Asia which would take into account not only India and Pakistan, but other threshold nuclear powers, such as Iran, Iraq and possibly Israel together with the Central Asian republics like Kazakhstan which have nuclear weapon installations on their soil. Secondly, India would not like the proposed conference to confine to imposing non-proliferation on only India and Pakistan, while the other three powers (the USA, Russia and China) would stand as guardians offering umbrella support to the two South Asian countries Instead, India wants all the powers to undertake equal responsibility for ensuring non-proliferation, so that there could be some guarantee for Indian security from the other three powers as well. The other details of the Dixit mission are yet to be disclosed. What is significant is that the very weekend that Dixit has arrived in Washington, the Pentagon policy paper has hit the headlines If this new approach to the idea of a five-power meet is to be taken up, one wonders why we should go only to Washington. Why can't we talk direct to two of our neighbours—Pakistan and China? Since the Pakistan Prime Minister was the first to make this proposal, why go all the way to Washington to respond to it? And with the renewal of contacts with China, this idea could have been taken up with the Chinese too. China is a nuclear power at our doorstep and we have to be assured by it of no nuclear strike from there. So, why not talk direct to Beijing?

Meanwhile, there has been widespread astonishment at the interview that Prime Minister Rao gave to the Indian fortnightly, *Onlooker*, about the same time as his New York visit in which he is quoted as having said: "We are firm in our resolve not to manufacture nuclear weapons." There is little room for the government to dismiss this as having wrongly quoted the Prime Minister, since this was broadcast by the government-owned All India Radio.

The Prime Minister's observation has provoked the distinguished scientist, Dr Raja Ramanna, the acknowledged architect of India's first nuclear explosion at Pokhran eighteen years ago, to raise the issue in the Rajya Sabha last week. He felt that Narasimha Rao's statement was "strange" as having gone contrary to the position of all former Prime Ministers from Indira Gandhi to Rajiv Gandhi, to V.P. Singh and Chandra Shekhar, since the clear stand of the Government of India so long had been that India would keep its option open in the event of Pakistan going in for the manufacture of a nuclear weapon. In the context of Pakistan having now officially disclosed its preparedness to make the nuclear bomb, Prime Minister Rao's "resolve not to manufacture nuclear weapons" has come as a total surprise. Not only Dr Raja Ramanna but also the former Finance Minister, Yashwant Sinha, has raised the issue in Parliament, and many others are likely to follow suit.

What is extraordinary is that such an important subject pertaining to the nation's security should be confined to diplomatic exxchanges and occasional *obiter dicta* in the press. In the past, the nuclear issue was repeatedly discussed in Parliament, right from the time of Jawaharlal Nehru The question whether India should sign the NPT or not was discussed threadbare in Parliament and all opinions clearly expressed, and the motion against signing it was carried by an overwhelming majority. This tradition has so long been kept up by the successive governments.

At a time when the present government is under tremendous pressure particularly from the US Administration on this subject, it is incumbent on its part to discuss the matter without any ambiguity in Parliament. It is no secret that there is a strong body of opinion in the country which favours India making nuclear weapons. This view is held by a large segment of public opinion, both civilian and military. This has been reinforced by Pakistan's open assertion of its preparedness for making the bomb after years of good-conduct certificates on this score given to it by successive US Presidents.

The Parliament, therefore, can no longer be denied the right to discuss this urgent issue of utmost concern, and the government must not fight shy of spelling out its considered view on it.

An open democratic society cannot do otherwise.■

(March 10)

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POLITICAL NOTEBOOK

Return to Murky Past ?

Are we back to the days when the ruling party wallowed in the murky game of encouraging defections in other parties with money power? Despite the existence of the Anti-Defection Act the law is being sought to be circumvented by the powers that be. Of late splits in several organisations—the Telugu Desam Party, the Shiv Sena and the Janata Dal—bring into focus the alleged Congress-I hand behind such developments. Even if internal problems of those parties are at the source of their current predicament, the charge against the Congress-I of having manipulated the splits by devious means cashing in on dissensions within their ranks cannot be brushed aside.

The affairs of the TDP have been mismanaged for long by its supremo, the redoubtable N.T. Rama Rao. There is much strength in the allegation of his detractors that he had been running the party as his fiefdom and the benign patronage he extended to his family members violated all norms of democratic organisation. The authoritarian streak in the TDP leader aggravated the situation as it militated against established conventions. The discontent was bound to result in some form of explosion. That it has happened in this manner betraying in the process the rank opportunism of the split-away faction does not absolve the TDP leadership and NTR in particular of the responsibility he must bear for having brought the party to such a pass.

At the same time it is difficult to reject off-hand the Opposition accusation that the Congress-I was the motive force behind the crisis the TDP is facing today. The party had issued a whip to all members of its parliamentary group to vote for the Opposition amendments to the President's Address. Six Lok Sabha members belonging to the TDP (who were later expelled from the party) remained absent from the House at the time of the crucial voting. This was the first trial of strength for the minority government of Narasimha Rao. The six TDP MPs' behaviour at this trial of strength strongly indicates connivance on the part of the Congress-I. This is not mere speculation. The Congress-I had earlier played a pivotal role in splitting the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra and roped in the noted Sena leader, Chhagan Bhujbal, who was later given a berth in the State Cabinet as a reward for his services to the Congress-I. Charges of intense horse-trading on the occasion could barely be countered effectively by the ruling party stalwarts. Similar charges have been levelled this time as well, and the Congress-I is finding it difficult to ward them off with routine denials.

The Congress-I's role in such exercises does not enhance the stature of its President, the first democratically elected chief of the organisation after a substantial length of time. It appears as if we are returning to the early eighties when the Congress-I, through remote control from the Centre, had ousted the elected government of N.T. Rama Rao with a

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pack of defectors in Andhra Pradesh. The people of that State had then given a befitting rebuff to such machinations behind their back. Unfortunately, the Congress-I seems to have learnt nothing from the humiliation it had to suffer at that time.

Narasimha Rao claims to be of a different breed of politicians standing apart from the polyester-khadi Congressmen dominating the ruling party today. But the activities of his party managers are ample evidence that the present dispensation is no different from the past Congress-I administrations since the early seventies. The developments in the TDP, like those in the Shiva Sena in Maharashtra, have been externalised by the Congress-I. This simple truth must be faced squarely by the party President and Prime Minister. Unless he promptly makes amends it would be difficult to prevent his image from getting besmirched.

The TDP also needs to draw necessary lessons from this episode. It is the method and style of functioning of the party leader which must come under thorough scrutiny. If the party wants to genuinely transform itself it cannot escape stringent self-introspection. The same applies to the leadership of the Janata Dal as well.

Some of the Congress-I stalwarts like Arjun Singh, the Union Human Resources Development Minister, have lately been speaking of a realignment of forces and consolidation of the Centrist and Left-of Centre forces in order to counter the regressive philosophy of the Right-wing *Hindutva* protagonists. But is it possible to bring about such a realignment when unwritten understandings with the BJP on a host of issues including the new economic policy are becoming crucial in the party's "pragmatic" development? Moreover, the return to the murky game of engineering splits in Centrist parties can hardly be conducive for such a realignment. What is thus necessary is for the Congress-I leadership to engage in an overall self-analysis of its activities and behaviour on the one hand, and its strategy, policy and priorities on the other. And this must be undertaken at the earliest.

March 17 S.C.

"Democratised" Congress

YOGESH PURI

P. V Narasimha Rao's unanimous election as the Congress President was the culmination of the party's entire election process in the last few months. The fact of the organisational elections being held after little over two decades may usher in a new phase of organisational democratisation. The essentially apolitical-bureaucratic party structure which characterised Indira-Rajiv regimes has now acquired the powerful potential to articulate a participatory organisational culture.

The last twenty odd years of the post-Nehru period had robbed the oldest and the biggest political party in modern India of its vibrant pluralism. The latter had intimately informed its ideological and organisational processes before independence and in the Nehru era, after independence. The Congress in the Nehru era possessed a nearly perfect combination of an extraordinary charismatic leadership at the apex and boss-cum-mini-charismatic leadership at the State level. The intermediate leadership with all its irrepressible and irresistible factional proclivities, however, provided a vital link between the Congress and the masses.

Mrs Indira Gandhi's leadership, though powerful and charismatic, particularly after the 1969 historic split, not only disregarded party norms but also created conditions in which inner-party democracy, collective functioning and dignified space for Pradesh party leadership were woefully weakened, if not definitely destroyed.

The author belongs to the Department of Political Science, Kirorimal College, University of Delhi.

Rajiv's stewardship symbolised the legacy of a debilitating democratic decline in the party organisation. The post-Nehru period of the Congress was, therefore, outstanding in augmenting authoritarian-oligarchical party practices and populist politics.

There is, of course, a discernible difference in the leadership scenario of the Congress in the past and the one emerging now. Until the end of the Rajiv era, the Congress pitiably depended on the Nehru-Gandhi family. But the party is increasingly learning to rely on a leadership pattern thrown up by the democratically institutionalised initiatives and the open ongoing organisational processes. It is true that fierce factionalism has stalled the completion of the electoral exercise in Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry and West Bengal. In Bihar, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Karnataka, where the elections were completed, the filling of the office of the PCC chiefs has been left to the party President—reminiscent of the age-old Congress culture.

But the fact of the Congress going through the democratic motion of a regular election in accordance with the rules and norms laid down by the party's

(Continued on page 35)

Dealing with United States

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

A strange situation of apparently contradictory facets mark the present phase of India's relationship with the United States of America.

Of late, there is a surfeit of talks about "shared values" ranging from commitment to democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law. To this has been added in recent months, the government's new economic policy which plays up private enterprise and underplays public sector—at least that's how it has been taken in the USA. And the government, in the President's Address to Parliament, has publicly acknowledged that the US Administration has been "supportive" of our endeavour to fight back the economic crisis—presumably in the IMF and the World Bank.

This tilt towards the USA has been pronounced after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the superficial understanding that the world has become unipolar, that is, instead of two superpowers, we would now be under the thumb of one and only one superpower. With the wisdom that discretion is the better part of valour, there has appeared a conspicuous urge to cultivate the USA and to be on the right side of Washington. This was heightened by the American display of military power in the Gulf war.

Our government's response to certain US diplomatic moves betrayed a very superficial understanding of the basics of the US policy. For quite sometime, there was a sense of elation that Washington now acknowledges India as a "significant regional power", playing a leading role in South Asia. This was followed by the US officials volunteering to recognise Kashmir as being part of India and to give up its previous insistence on plebiscite to settle the Kashmir dispute. On the formal plane, this was of course a shift in the US position which, on the face f it, undermines the Pakistani claim on Kashmir.

What is noteworthy is that in the very same eriod there has been a concerted campaign about he violation of human rights in Kashmir by the ndian security forces. In other words, a case was eing built up with plenty of sophistication about ndia being unacceptable to the entire Kashmiri pulation in the Valley—and this might help to built up an alibi for UN mediation, maybe through the personal diplomacy of the UN Secretary-General, or a special envoy nominated by him, as was done in the case of Afghanistan. This view can of course be contested since it is reported that the US establishment now does not charge India of having been guilty of violation of human rights either in Punjab or in Kashmir. Could this possibly be a genuinely sincere assessment, or is it a tactical move, since it is known that the big powers cynically exploit the human rights question for purposes of political expediency? It is possible that the sop itself is a sort of quid pro quo extracted from India. Is this in return for the diplomatic recognition of Israel accorded by New Delhi, or for inveigling India to go in for nuclear non-proliferation even if it could not be persuaded to sign the NPT?

The nuclear issue has become an obsession on the part of Washington. There is no serious urge for nuclear disarmament on the part of the USA. In such circumstances, this insistence on nuclear non-proliferation being imposed on the rest of the world amounts to Washington making a bid for using nuclear monopoly to establish its world hegemony. Unmistakably, the US approach to the nuclear question has a distinct touch of the White Man's superiority—no worry if the nuclear weapons are in the possession of Russia, but it becomes a matter of worry if Kazakhstan retains the nuclear installation. There is all the worry in the world if India and Pakistan have the bomb, or for that matter, Iran and Iraq, but no disquiet at all over Israel's nuclear programme.

With regard to Pakistan's nuclear weapons preparedness, the US Administration uses it as a leverage for pressure on India to sign at least a bilateral non-proliferation declaration. It is important to note that the Pakistan Foreign Secretary's disclosure of Pakistan's nuclear weapon capability came during his Washington visit, and this is being neatly suffixed by the stand that an Indian initiative for non-proliferation can help to persuade Pakistan also to abjure the nuclear weapon. The point to note, however, is that with all the threat of penalising Pakistan for making the nuclear bomb, the US

Administration itself has sanctioned the sale of conventional military weaponry to Pakistan.

What is also rather extraordinary is that the Indian Government is telling the US Government to persuade two of our neighbours, China and Pakistan, to agree to nuclear non-proliferation. This is a job which New Delhi ought to take up on its own.

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IN this background, one has to weigh the pros and cons of the emerging Indo-US cooperation in the field of defence. What is being held back from the public of this country is the full picture of this cooperation and its implications. There are many strange features of this cooperation which have rapidly grown in the last one year, particularly after the visit of our Army Chief, General Rodrigues, to the Pentagon. Could it be that this Pentagon *yatra*, gave him ideas which he recently aired landing himself in hot waters in Parliament? It is amazing that the now famous Kicklighter proposals were agreed to without any political debate in Parliament or any consultation with leaders of other parties despite the fact that the ruling party itself does not command a majority in Parliament. What exactly is the role of the newly set up Indo-US Army Steering Committee? It is said that this military cooperation would help the Indian side in getting familiar with the nature and operation of the hi-tech weapons used by the US in the Gulf war.

Now we find that a joint Indo-US naval exercise will soon take place in the Indian Ocean. Oddly enough, our Prime Minister during his visit to Mauritius last week, formally supported the island republic's claim on the archipelago that includes Diego Garcia, now the biggest US military base in the Indian Ocean, which will certainly be involved in the proposed joint Indo-US naval exercise. Incidentally, it may be recalled that the Indian navy did not have any such joint naval exercise with the Soviet navy despite the fact that the Soviet cooperation towards the building up of the Indian navy is of no mean order.

The leaked Pentagon document, we are now told, does not represent the official view of the US Administration; though the White House seems to have had a hand in its preparation. But it certainly provides an insight into the Pentagon's thinking. This document comes out sharp and clear on the need to break India's "hegemonistic aspirations" over South Asia, and at the same time manifests a cosy understanding towards Pakistan whose nuclear bomb does not seem to come in the way of the US having plans to use its mlitary strength for the promotion of American objectives in South-West Asia and Central Asia. For the Indian military leadership, the potential adversary has throughout been Pakistan, and from the sixties, China too. Now with all the excitement of having joint military exercises with the USA, our armed forces will be disclosing data on our military capability, the weapons system and the tactical approach with a power which regards Pakistan as a close ally. Would this not jeopardise confidentiality of our defence preparedness vis-a-vis one of our potential adversaries? It is also known that the US Administration is insisting on prying into our * missile technology programme: certainly a matter of utmost concern for our national security.

The members of Parliament were agitated over the US Trade Representative, Carla Hills' brusque and offensive remarks, threatening to impose sanctions if India did not agree to the American terms on the issue of trade and intellectual property. The Indian plea that since these issues now having been taken up at the GATT, it would be preferable to take them up at the multilateral forum than being dealt with bilaterally, was unacceptable to Carla Hills who seems to want India to bow right now to Washington if it was to escape the clutches of Super 301. Here is an amazing case of a great power demanding open-door for trade and investment in another country, and threatening that very country to submit to its onerous terms and scrap all protective regulations to safeguard indigenous enterprise. So much for "the shared values" and the US' "supportive" role to help us overcome our economic difficulties.

Our members of Parliament have been agitated over what our Foreign Secretary said or was made to listen during his Washington visit last week. It is no use blaming the Foreign Secretary. The fault lies with our government not yet having a clear view of how to deal with the USA. Nobody is asking that our government should take an angry, hostile and bellicose posture towards the USA. What is urgently wanted is a full comprehension of the implications of the multi-dimensional nature of the relationship between the two countries that has now been emerging. What is needed is clear thinking of how to uphold our independence of judgement while dealing with a great power which seems today to be dizzy with its own importance as the overlord.

A friendly but firm, unbending stand on the part of this country can go a long way towards helpin the USA to take a chastened, realistic view particularly towards the Third World. New Delhi ca hardly afford to minimise its important responsibility not only to guard this country's national interest but help Washington to realise its own responsibility towards the world at large.

(March 14)

Invoking Bhagat Singh and Inviting Imperialists

ASHOK MITRA

Is not the show of anger organised by the Opposition parties, both inside Parliament and outside, somewhat beside the point? They have gone to great lengths to establish a specific nexus between the commitments made in the Finance Minister, Manmohan Singh's memorandum to the International Monetary Fund last August and in his subsequent letter to the World Bank President in November and certain decisions now up for implementation through the Budget.

Nitpickings of this nature are indeed fatuous. For the sake of maintaining nominal parliamentary propriety, the Finance Minister and the rest of the government would keep denying that the contents of the Budget were discussed *a priori* with the Fund-Bank representatives; the Finance Minister might even be formally right in claiming that the text of the Budget speech had not been shown to the minions of the Fund and the Bank before it was read out by him in the Lok Sabha.

None of this, however, contradicts what has been accepted as basic reality in the marketplace as well as in hearths and homes: each and every aspect of the Budget has been discussed threadbare, at the stage of both its conception and its incubation, with the Fund and the Bank, and matters over which difficulties arose were sorted out by exchange of communications between downtown Washington and the North Block. It was in essence a multi-stage operation. A number of measures the international financial institutions insisted that India must pursue and put into shape through the Budget were vetted by dummy committees set up under the auspices of the Government of India; the recommendations these committees made were in closest conformity to advice rendered, and sometimes, even drafted to the minutest detail, by the Fund-Bank staff.

Several such recommendations have been incorporated in the Budget, the government is under pledge, as per the Finance Minister's deeds of surrender forwarded to the Fund Managing Director and the Bank President, to implement a few other decisions as well in the course of the year through assorted monetary, fiscal, legal and administrative measures. Were they sharp-witted enough, members of Parliament belonging to the Opposition could have turned the table on the Finance Minister the moment he bragged that the fiscal deficit in the current year was being contained to within 6.5 per cent of the gross domestic product. Whether the actual deficit would turn out to be as low as this, or some fudging of accounts is involved, is a tale which will be revealed only subsequently. But it has been a widely known fact for the past several months that the Fund-Bank had been insisting that the deficit must not, come hell or high water, exceed this proportion of the GDP, and the Finance Minister jolly well had to conform to the directive from Washington DC.

The author, a distinguished economist, is the former Finance Minister, West Bengal.

The Opposition has failed to avail of the opportunity to make the government cower for cover.

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CONSIDER some of the nuggets the Budget speech contains. In the opening paragraph itself, there is a reference to the grave economic crisis the Finance Minister and his government had 'inherited' even as they entered office. An inheritance is an external bequest, for which one does not, and need not, have to own up any responsibility. This was hardly the case with the exchange crisis which confronted P.V. Narasimha Rao's government.

The exchange crisis and the nation being on the verge of defaulting on its external debt-servicing obligations were not phenomena which could, by any stretch, be attributed to outside malefactors. It was the Congress party and its high-flying regime, crossing over to the philosophy of unbridled capitalism, which created the crisis and ensured that, in the five years between 1984 and 1989, the country's total foreign debt soared from less than $15 billion to as much as $70 billion. There is little purpose in hiding the point that the regime, bitten by the bug of globalisation and consumerism, pushed the country into a permanent, irretrievable external debt trap. Given the structure of our production and income distribution, we did not possess the capability to service such a huge debt; this was possible only by incurring, continuously and indefinitely, further and further loans.

The present Finance Minister's exclusive claim to glory is that he has succeeded in persuading his colleagues, including his Prime Minister, to agree that the only way out of the dilemma is to convert this country of close to 900 million people into a docile banana republic of the Latin American species, and thereby escape the ignominy of defaulting on debt servicing. At the time the Finance Minister took over last year, the country's aggregate foreign balances had been run down to as low as the equivalent of Rs 1500 crores. Because of the dexterous servility he has displayed, he has since received substantial additinal lines of credit from the Fund, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and one or two other international financial institutions. What he has done is in strict accordance with the classical pattern followed by all countries caught in the mire of an external debt trap: you borrow more in order to meet your past obligations, and thereby sink even deeper into debt.

The hoopla in the media reflects either the level of illiteracy of our so-called literati—or perhaps their genuine desire to surrender the prerogative of indpendent decision-making if in the bargain they could ensure enough short-term goodies for their own narrow set. As a consequence of the government's—and the Finance Minister's—exertions, we are now amongst the Third World's leading debtors, coming immediately behind Mexico and Brazil.

There are some concomitants attached to occupying such an exalted position: not only do one's economic policies become subject to the dictates of foreigners, one's foreign policy too is made to turn a full circle. Leave aside other aspects, we are now on the point of accepting Israel's Mossad as the principal adviser on how to contain insurrectionary activities.

The gloating headlines in the newspapers are artfully contrived; they make it difficult to separate the wheat of concrete achievements of the government from the chaff of public relations exercises. On the supposedly "positive" side, the Finance Minister can lay claim to having raised eight to ten thousand crores of additional medium and long-term credits from overseas and to having enticed the entry of a couple of thousand crores of hot money, mostly belonging to smugglers and others who have been promised that no legal discrimination is to be made between them and otherwise slightly more honourable citizens.

Ten thousand crores of extra foreign exchange are certainly not to be scoffed at by such a spiritually-minded nation as ours, but let us tot up the negative side of the balance too: two devaluations, and subsequent further depreciations of the rupee, which have offered no boost to exports but have further strengthened the forces of inflation rendering exports even more difficult; the scuttling of economic planning, the Planning Commission now exists only in name; a severe cutback in rural employment programmes and anti-poverty projects; a Fund-Bank directed fiscal and monetary policy which places premium on credit squeeze and high interest rates, thus further invigorating the trends of industrial recession; the purposive draining of public savings and state-assisted diversion of savings to private mutual funds so that resources are freely available for stock exchange speculations; and similar other indulgences on the part of the nation's affluent; the aggravated squeeze on public expenditure which threatens the jobs of millions as well as erodes the basic social services, including public distribution and education.

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SCAN the nation's newspapers, these are minor footnotes to be ignored: the country is globalised, income and corporate tax rates are lowered, imports on air-conditioned restaurants are off, corporate shares have reached dizzy heights, there is promise of both full liberalisation of imports and partial convertibility of the rupee, so that the Naipaulian craze for *phoren* could be fully satiated. All impediments on big monopoly houses and foreign investors are off; small enterprises will go to the wall; local scientists and technologists are likely to be left with no opportunity to devote their talent to serve the nation's cause; the knee-jerk approach to the Dunkel proposals and the glee with which collaboration agreements are being signed with foreign parties would see to that.

The crucial facts pertaining to the economy are meanwhile to be pushed under the carpet. Per capita output of farm produce has dipped in the past decade. And irony of ironies, only public sector industrial units, including power-producing units, have maintained the modicum of a respectable

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Unashamedly for the Haves

H.K. PARANJAPE

Within the paradigm that the present Congress-I Government has accepted for the socio-economic restructuring of the country, Dr Manmohan Singh's Budget cannot be much faulted. True, there is a bit of window-dressing to show that the deficit financing has been limited to the limit agreed to between the government and the IMF; by postponing the decision on fertiliser subsidy and making only a small provision for it in the Budget, the actual impact has been covered up; and the insistence that all additional DA accruing during the year will be absorbed within the sanctioned amounts, decisions about expenditure distribution between staff and actual functioning have been merely wished away. But basically the Budget fulfils the requirements of an economy which is to be rapidly transformed into an efficient capitalist one, operating as a limb of the world capitalist economy, in junior and subservient partnership with the rich capitalist world.

The Opposition NF-Left groups are pursuing a chimera when attempting to catch Dr Manmohan Singh in the trap of having revealed budget proposals to the IMF-World Bank twins. Dr Singh is too experienced a civil servant to fall in any such traps. The really important point is that the paradigm for the future of the Indian ecconomy which Dr Singh has been able to sell to the Congress-I is no different from that advocated for long by the twin institutions; and which had been repudiated—at least in theory if not increasingly in practice—not only by Pandit Nehru but even by Smt Indira Gandhi. The Second Plan framework, the Industrial Policy of 1956 and the emphasis on a socialist pattern were all a part of a basically different approach for building up a politically democratic, economically strong and self-reliant and socially egalitarian India which had been at its very threshold pposed by the then President of the World Bank. ut the Congress Government under Pandit Nehru lt strong enough in 1954-55 to tell this dignitary hat, while aid was welcome, India would pursue her own chosen path without dictation from the aid-offering rich of the world. That is why there was a kind of national consensus on the Second Plan approach; and, whatever the deviations in actual practice—and these were galore beginning from 1958-59 itself—the Congress party and their governments kept up the facade of following that basic approach right till the Seventh Plan. It is only in 1991 that the legacy was openly repudiated, even though the ground for this was being prepared right from 1980-81, if not 1973.

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PRIME Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao is being too ingenious in claiming that "the economic reforms being carried out today are a logical consequence of the path adopted in the 1950". Yes, it is a logical continuation of the "slide" which began even in the midst of the Second Plan when Pandit Nehru and his party could not display necessary courage to stand up to the logical consequences of austerity and discipline which followed from their brave adopting of the path chalked out in the Plan document. And since then it has been a race between the populist rhetoric necessary to garner votes and the practical compulsions due to *realpolitic*, economic—and therefore political—power being increasingly concentrated in the hands of a small stratum of political operators, bureaucrats, industrialists, traders, large landholders and the vocal professional classes. It is this conflict which finally led to increasing corruption, support to the parallel economy financial irresponsibility and the tendency—especially in the name of moving towards the twentyfirst century—to undertake loan based imports for the benefit of the well-to-do strata. The bitter results of such stupidity brought the country to the verge of bankruptcy by 1989.

As in any national crisis, the situation could have been met in either of the following two ways. The leadership of the country could have adopted a path of mobilising the whole people, call upon them to cooperate in saving the sovereignty and socio-economic progress of the country by pursuing

he author, a noted economist, is the Editor of the ell-known periodical, Janata.

austerity, hard work, productivity and discipline, and assured outside creditors of slow but steady repayment. But this would have meant giving up the privileges, soft life and ostentation based on exploitation of the masses to which the small privileged ruling class in India has become accustomed. They, therefore, chose the other and easier path of bowing to the dictates of the rich of the world given through their representatives—the Washington twins—in the hope that this way they would be able to share in the loot that they will garner in a capitalist India and an increasingly capitalist world. Dr Manmohan Singh spoke about rousing the tiger instincts of the entrepreneurs in India. The Indian tigers are quite willing to share in the feast that the capitalist tigers of the world are enjoying by becoming their junior partners, and the ruling classes in India at long last saw the light—that their real interest lay in pursuing the path shown by the IMF-World Bank twins and not the mirage of socialism (which in any case no one was really pursuing). And they were now confident after the experience of forty years that the poor in India can be made to politically support their own exploitation, only some ingenuity has to be shown in obtaining their support. It is merely a question of which facade can sell better *Garibi Hatao,* Ram Janmabhoomi, or Mandal Commission (not land reforms, only service reservations)! Real egalitarianism can be then postponed till doomsday.

After all, V.P. Singh as the Finance Minister in Rajiv Gandhi's government had participated in pursuing this path, his NF Government—even with a socialist Finance Minister—as well as the Chandra Shekhar Government, appeared to be ready to adopt the path indicated by the IMF-WB twins, and—whatever the resolutions passed in Delhi by their Central Committees—the Left Front parties have shown in West Bengal little difference—except in the early land reforms—in the economic policy as compared to the Congress-I governments. In fact, Dr Manmohan Singh was clever enough to point out that it was Jyoti Basu who had suggested that taxes on motor cars should not be raised. He is obviously worried about the unemployment it would cause to a few hundred in West Bengal, and forgets about the overall impact of such softness towards consumerism on the overall economic path! And the BJP's real priorities were well indicated by L.K. Advani whose first reaction after hearing the Budget speech was that the raising of the income tax exemption limit to Rs 28,000 was too inadequate! That shows the real stratum of people he cares about—"the emerging middle class"—not those who are unemployed, those 50 per cent who are still below the poverty line. It is heartening that the RSS has at last got over its Ram syndrome and begun to speak about safeguarding *swadeshi.* But their poor economic understanding is shown by their thinking that the Tatas, Birlas and such other industrial magnates still represent *swadeshi.* They overlook that these people are now eager to become the junior partners of multinationals to exploit the masses of India. There is a long gap—of time and of perspective—between Jamshedji Tata or Visheswarayya and Ratan Tata or Aditya Birla.

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THE Congress-I (and almost the whole ruling elite) is basically taking the top decile of our people as their real constituency. The Budget—and the New Economic Policy—is aimed at their becoming prosperous. And, in that light, it is a good Budget. It reduces the scope for corruption, provides less incentive for tax evasion (though it is doubtful whether that will help) and provides a good new outlet for those holding black money to whiten it through partial convertibility and gold import. It is no use criticising it for not making enough provision for the common people's requirements such as elementary education, primary health, pollution control or for more employment. Elite requirements are being met through larger grants for Navodaya Vidyalayas and New Delhi institutions like the AIIMS. After all, the new paradigm assumes that—as Minoo Masani has demanded for so long—money should be left to fructify in the pockets of the people—that is, the real 'people', the rich and the well-to-do—and then slowly, reluctantly, it will percolate down to keep the riff-raff alive so that they should not revolt. The new ruling class well remembers that a graded caste system, including untouchability, and a social system of permanent low status for women, have been tolerated in this country for centuries by those affected; so why should they worry about the unemployment, social degradation and poverty which will continue to affect a large majority? Have they not been able to win elections over the last forty years? Wh cannot they continue to do so, especially now tha a new form of circuses to delude the masses i available in the form of electronic media?

True, this approach will mean the return colonialism—not under a foreign flag, but und

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YOGESH PURI: "Democratised" Congress

(Continued from page 2)

statutes, is a positive trend, worthy of appreciation and emulation, more so, by other Centrist political formations, such as, the Janata Dal. To expect and hope for a faction-free electoral process is to betray lack of understanding of the rationale of factions and their role in the Congress. It is only when factionalism in the Congress reached a stage of intolerable indiscipline that the former proved to be dysfunctional. Otherwise Congress factionalism, within the permissible organisational and democratic limits, not only created intra-party pluralism but also developed diverse vote-banks for the party and strengthened its heterogeneous support bases facilitating consensual decision-making.

The organisational elections, despite factional infighting, but because of factional diversity may help the Congress to nurture and develop inner-party democracy and collective functioning. But it must also be noted that due to the emergence and institutionalisation of the choking coterie culture and the continuation of the 'supreme leader' syndrome, the factions in the post-Nehru Congress were broadly structured on personality-power considerations. The incidence of tendencies, non-aligned partisans, idea and policy groups has declined, if not decisively decimated. These organisational elections may, hopefully, prepare the ground for the re-emergence of intra-party policy pluralism.

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THE democratic advance of the Congress, implicit in the holding of the organisational elections, cannot, however, obliterate the fact that these elections in and by themselves will not be sufficient to re-establish the rapport of the Congress with the masses, ruptured particularly in the North Indian States. The moot question is the declining and dwindling heterogeneous social bases of the Congress. The social base of the party, especially in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, has become vividly vulnerable. The Congress has immensely suffered at the hands of the Janata Dal in Bihar, at the hands of both the BJP and the Janata Dal and its splintered groups in Uttar Pradesh, and at the hands of the BJP in Gujarat and Rajasthan (though it is showing signs of reasonable recovery in Madhya Pradesh). It has conceded substantially to the Janata Dal its stable Muslim support base and has alienated almost all sections of the OBCs. It has, likewise, considerably lost, to the advantage of the BJP, its upper caste Hindu votes. The Congress has not been able to halt the *Hindutva* assault, in spite of playing a soft-Hindu card. This card was helpful to the Congress in the 1984 elections but ruefully recoiled on it in the subsequent elections of 1989 and 1991.

Moreover, there has emerged in the post-1989 period an increasing indistinguishability between the rank-and-file of the Congress and the BJP. The BJP's religio-cultural strident sentiments on the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue, its political stand on the abolition of Article 370, its decrying of 'minorityism' and disdainful denouncement of 'pseudo-secularism', its attributing these negative categories and concepts generally to the Congress, and, above all, its ardent articulation of not only homogenised but also hegemonised Hindu nationalism have further brought the mass members of both the parties closer to each other. This is, however, more true of their upper caste cadres and sympathisers. The upper caste grassroots and middle levels of these two parties were also ideologically united by their strong antipathy for the Mandal recommendations. This was upper caste social solidarity, at its unprecedented best, in the post-independence era. This indistinguishability may, therefore, further erode the Congress' social base amongst the upper castes.

The erosion of the Muslim and the OBC support can be attributed to the Congress concept of secularism being endemically bereft of any meaningful social content. The Congress collapse in Bihar should not be dismissed as casteist catastrophe epitomised by the Forwards-Backwards divide. This is an oversimplification. The issue of social justice has been hanging fire since the dawn of independence. As a matter of fact no rational relationship has been established between economic development and social equality. The Congress has palpably practised the politics of evasion to the legitimate power aspirations of the socially deprived Backwards. Recovering and regaining the support of the OBCs and the Muslims is, therefore, a formidable challenge to the Congress. The almost irremovable identification of the Congress with 'soft Hinduism' has, similarly, compromised the secular standing of the party. This has led to a massive disenchantment of the Muslims.

The new economic policies based largely on the IMF-World Bank development strategy, techno-managerial policy perspectives and neo-colonial modernisation models have enormously endeared the Congress to the powerful sections of the rich, the liberal non-socialist and the conservative anti-socialist opinion of the old and the new middle classes. The decline of communism and the demise of the USSR have also lent legitimacy to the relegation of "democratic socialist" commitment of the Congress to the background. But the Congress may not be able to carry conviction with the poorer sections in the rural and urban segments. Dr Manmohan Singh's Budget is bound to produce greater economic hardships for the people. The political impact of the new economic policies, notwithstanding the possible inauguration of the democratic chapter of the Congress as a consequence of the organisational elections, may thus lead to greater social shrinkage of the party.

A socially insensitive economic policy in the name of "structural adjustments", ambivalence on the issue of social justice and frequent flirtation with soft Hinduism (read soft communalism) have, thus, reduced the Congress to an instrument which no longer can effectively serve the masses marginalised by continuous deprivation, neglect and poverty ■

find it difficult to take out a living. As against this, the backward communities who were earlier doomed to do menial jobs and participate in small activities such as milching, washing clothes, etc. are now ruling the roost in various States. Bihar is even headed by members of the so-called "backward communities". As such with the breakdown in the traditional occupational structure of the various castes, no generalisation of deprivation of any caste can be made. Therefore, although the reservation policy for the SC and ST candidates of upto 22.5 per cent is acceptable even today if used with caution for a limited period of time, a 60 per cent reservation cannot be justified under any circumstances no mater to which class or cluster of people it is meant for.

Faulty Manpower Planning

Another angle to the increased reservations is the non-availability of suitable candidates despite relaxed selection criteria to fill up the number of vacancies. Assuming the government has identified a hundred vacancies of which it decides that 60 have to be filled up by the various categories of people as postulated, in case only 30 qualify from the reserved category, will the government carry forward the vacancies as it has started doing since 1989 by putting a stop to dereservation as was the practice earlier? In that case 30 valuable jobs will remain unfilled which will go on mounting with every year if people from the reserved category do not qualify to meet the minimum requirements. More so, the government's manpower planning will be at stake and it will not have the manpower when it needs it most.

Zeroing In

The crux of the matter is that the government is merely befooling the public with its proposed policy on reservation. With only 10 per cent of the jobs provided by the organised sector and only seven per cent provided by the public sector, the government will be doing gross injustice to the interest of general classes and exploiting the ignorance of the average so-called backward citizens for the sake of votes. 90 per cent of the jobs are in agriculture and the unorganised sector which have to be modernised by various inputs to create more employment as spelt out earlier. Moreover, with barely 50 per cent of the population being literate, reservation in government jobs will have no meaning for the masses as they would not even meet the most minimal academic standards.

If we zero down further on the current figures of unemployment, especially of the educated unemployed, the situation is bound to worsen and cannot sustain reservations of this magnitude no matter what the criteria.

Deciding on a policy of increased reservation waiver of agriculture loans are not political compulsions or means to social justice as pleaded by the government but indulgence in political gimmicry for vote-banks at the cost of the nation. Political compulsions are the vicious problems of unemployment, illiteracy, poverty, inflation, etc. to tackle which the government lacks the requisite political will.

The Economic Solution

With changes in the industrial policy and with industrial licencing done away with, the government hopes to work towards a favourable balance of payment by boosting exports. But with all the hard decisions the government has taken, it is highly unlikely that exports will be boosted to the desired level due to the high cost of production of our goods as a result of which they do not have a competitive advantage in the international market. It is ironical that India with low labour costs still has a high cost of production. The main reason for this is the magnitude of indirect taxes on commodities heavy on this saturated sector because these very same political compulsions leave out the agricultural sector from the purview of taxes. As a result, all the taxation is borne by the manufacturing industry leading to increasing cost. Added to this is the vicious low consumption per capita in India despite its vast population reserve which, in turn, ensures low employment level in manufacturing and service industries. Unless domestic consumption is boosted up, there cannot be greater employment generation. Domestic consumption can be boosted only if the disposable income is increased through reduced costs and increased real income levels. With increase in domestic consumption, there would be greater income employment generation and greater economic growth.

The government has to, therefore, immediately widen its tax base also to generate greater income by taxing rich agriculturists who do not pay taxes till now and at the same time, take measures to make small agricultural holdings more economically profitable and generate employment in this sector. Here it must enlist the support of the organised private sector by encouraging their entry in these areas. The government has failed miserably in generating employment and it should, therefore, give tax concessions and other benefits to the private sector for generating greater employment which will persuade them into going in for more employment generating technology.

The World Bank projections for the future are that India's population is likely to cross the billion mark by the turn of the century at which time half of the world's illiterates would be living in India. The labour force, as projected in 'Manorama' 1991, is to grow by 3.7 crores during the Eighth Plan (that is, 1990-95) and by another four crores between 1995-2000. Employment will have to grow at a rate of more than four per cent per annum to reach the goal of near full employment by 1995 and by over three per cent, if this goal is to be accomplished by the turn of the century.

Even these figures are underestimates, if we don't take stock of the current industrial policy and the displacement of labour due to closing down of sick units and measures on work rationalisation. The government has to be crystal clear about what its political compulsions really are and spell out its priorities with the welfare of the nation as its only objective and start tackling the multipronged issues on the economic front. It will require more hard decisions to be taken after thorough analysis and an even stronger will to make these decisions work. Once the government launches seriously into tackling these issues, more help will be forthcoming from other sources also. The measures should be time-bound and determined like the headcount for the Census which was done in record time and with perfection. It is better to start even now than never! ■

ever good the seeming intentions of the government may be to bring about social justice through equality of opportunity, it must realise that reservations would only perculate to the educationally and financially well-off sections of the reserved categories who exercise all the political muscle of the backward classes. It is this miniscule sub-section which is most vociferous in its demand for caste-based reservations without any economic or social criteria attached to it. Further, it will become a heriditary and a irreversible right passed on from one generation to the other among the fortunate few of the reserved classes.

Ensured reservation patronage for the fortunate few and competitive advantage will cut into their will to work hard for merit and reach even higher levels. Further, it is in their self-interest not to make any attempts at educating their other brethren and at the same time keep demanding for more reservations in all walks of life. Instead it would be advisable to provide incentives and structural support to the educated among the backwards for opening schools in rural areas and assigning them the task of educating the other illiterates from the community to aid social transformation.

Achievement Chasm

A rough analysis of the recent public sector employments made on competitive basis with the existing percentage of reservation in officer cadre jobs revealed that only those candidates who had a high level of achievement could succeed in getting employment. It also pointed out to the wide chasm in the academic achievement levels of those selected from the reserved and unreserved category, with anyone who was fairly educated having an almost sure chance of getting the employment from the reserved quota.

The apprehensions are that with increased reservation the people who will actually qualify for these jobs will get further narrowed down to only the top rankers of the general category leading to a higher level of frustration and consequent rise in social ills unless a wider employment base is created. As it is, the academic pressure on students and the level of close competition is extremely killing. This can be seen in the high cut of levels for admission to even undergraduate courses.

Under these circumstances, the fate of even the above average is also sealed. With increase in frustration on account of unemployment, the social evils are bound to increase in the form of corruption, black money, kidnappings, terrorism and mental derangements and in trying to further materialistic ends no matter what the means are. With increased reservations the people of general categories who will actually qualify will get further narrowed down to only the top rankers and result in dangerous social consequences.

Economic Criteria—The Pandora's Box

Basing reservations on an economic criteria to promote social justice is another pandora's box. With just a negligible minority consisting of mainly the salaried class being assessed for their income correctly the remaining go scot free. The government has so far not been able to assess the incomes of professionals, traders, and other self-employed people, tribals, etc. and have excluded the agricultural sector from the purview of income tax. With rampant corruption, even some of the government employees have other sources of income which the existing tax structure can neither assess nor unearth. With concealment of income to such a massive scale, it would require no effort to prove that one is in economic necessity of a job. Fake income certificates are easily obtainable as also the status of the citizen as being socially deprived. How will the government, therefore, ensure that it is the poorest who would benefit from reservations?

Another difficulty of evolving an economic criteria is the almost galloping rate of inflation. With the inflation rate at 15 per cent per annum no yardstick of measuring income can be used. Even a fixed salary income of Rs 5000 a month today barely helps to keep one's head above water. Can it then be concluded that the progeny of a person with a salaried income of Rs 500 a month does not require a job to nurture a family and look after his dependent parents? The increased achievement chasm as discussed earlier will reduce greatly his chances of getting a reasonable job. His reliance on government and private sector jobs is greater as he has no family occupation normally to fall back on.

The Justification

Reservation in jobs as mooted by the Constitution was to provide reasonable representation in the government of all the communities and also as a means of providing equality of opportunity which is a fundamental right under the Constitution. B.R. Ambedkar, while defending a limited degree of reservation for a limited period, very appropriately put forth his argument. His contention was that if reservation of say 70 per cent for the government posts was made to a class of communities and if 30 per cent was open for general competition, the purpose of the equality of opportunity will not be served. In the same way, if protection in the form of certain limited representation is not given to societies which were socially treated as *pariahs* for centuries, they would not be able to rise above the morass and will continue to be subservient as before. Moreover, reservation was never meant as an instrument of eradicating poverty but only as a protective measure for a limited period so that these communities could, through reservation, educate themselves and finally compete on an equal basis with the others.

It is, therefore, paradoxical that to eradicate the caste system we are relying more and more on caste-divide policies. The consciousness of one's caste was slowly dying, but this has been activated again. There is a great clamour among various castes for inclusion among the category of the OBCs which is to benefit from the increased reservations.

The traditional occupation of the various castes are no more in sway. For instance, the Brahmins were traditionally the fountainheads of knowledge. Those of them who are still continuing their traditional occupation as pujaris are very poor and have to look to other sources of employment to make two ends meet. Similarly, the Kshtriyas who were the kings and the land-owning warrior class are in all walks of life may of whom again level of employment been more complimentary the public outcry against reservations would have been minimal. As such the decision to augment reservation with the government's ambit of control only on seven per cent of the working population is to sideline the main issues facing the country of unemployment, poverty, corruption, underemployment, urbanisation, etc.

The increase in unemployment and frustration is mostly rampant with the educated unemployed, that is, matriculates and above who are the plum contestants for the seven per cent public sector jobs. The pressure on these jobs are high as they provide a decent standard of living, inflation adjusted remuneration, complete job security and responsibility and accountability that suits the pace of the individual himself. They are highly sought after jobs. No matter whether it is an entry into the topmost rung, that is, the Civil Services or at the Class IV level.

The total number of job-seekers on the live registers of the employment exchanges stood at 3.01, 3.28 and 3.42 crores as at December 1988, December 1989 and August 1990 respectively, that is, a sharp increase of 14 lakhs in eight months. The total number of educated job-seekers among these was 1.75 crores in December, 1988 and 1.91 crores in December 1989, that is, an increase of 16.24 lakhs or 9.3 per cent increase in one year. The educated unemployed comprised of 58 per cent of the total registered unemployed in December 1988 with a break-up of one crore matriculates, 45 lakhs undergraduates, graduates and above numbering 29 lakhs. The registration with the employment exchanges gives only a partial picture as it is confined to urban areas. It does not give the magnitude of unemployment in rural areas or the plight of the higher bracket of the educated unemployed who contest for Civil Services, etc. which do not go through the employment exchanges for its selection.

The Growing Malaise

Correlating statistics of the urban population with the figure of unemployment given above, it can be concluded that 16 per cent of the urban population in 1990 was unemployed. The urban population as per 1991 Census is 21.7 crores residing in 4689 cities and towns and accounts for 25.5 per cent of the total population of India which is provisionally placed at 84.4 crores. The urban population growth has increased from 11 per cent in 1901 to 26 per cent in 1991 which is due to mass exodus from rural areas on account of the unemployment and disguised unemployed levels.

Likely Solutions

Strengthening the rural sector will prevent rapid urbanisation and other associated problems. By purposeful investment aimed at optimising the returns from agriculture and also creating supplementary income to take care of underemployment and uncertainty through poultry farming, investment in rural infrastructure in the form of irrigation, roads, technical training centres, marketing cooperators and polytechniques, more income and employment can be generated in this sector. This would be a more practical and viable proposition than announcing mass waiver of outstanding agricultural loans which not only eat into government revenue but also cuts into the will to pay and destroys the income and employment generating potential of this sector.

Who Will Benefit?

As per the 1981 Census 76.4 per cent and 87 per cent respectively of SC & ST population was employed in agriculture either as cultivators or agricultural workers. As such reservations in government jobs is not going to benefit the majority of the backward communities due to their dependance on agriculture. Taking the level of literacy in the country, they will not even fulfil the minimum educational qualifications required in government jobs even with relaxation in criteria.

Although the literacy level taken of population over seven years of age has gone up to 52.1 per cent in 1991 against 43.6 per cent prevailing in 1981, the sheer number of illiterates have also shown an increase from 30.2 in 1981 to 32.4 crores in 1991 or an increase of 2.2 crores in 10 years. The definition of literacy itself is a misnomer as any person who can read or write with understanding in any language is considered as a literate.

The government efforts have concentrated on providing free education almost upto the secondary level coupled with other promoting measures such as mid-day meal schemes to spread literacy. But although these schemes have increased the absolute number of students, it has not succeeded in achieving full attendance or in eliminating the high drop-out rate and poor attendance after enrolment. The SC & ST drop-out rate in Classes I to V was as high as 50.8 and 66 per cent respectively as reported by the Committee for review of National Policy on Education in 1990. Another glaring statistic of the Committee was that in 1986 48.6 per cent of the rural areas did not even have a primary school which meant that 19.7 per cent of the total population had no access to even a school.

Need for Employment-oriented Education

These problems can be sorted out if education is made compulsory as it infringes upon no fundamental right and the education package demonstrates its direct relevance to meet the felt needs of the community it is meant for and thereby ensure their willing participation. The package should consist of basic elementary education with emphasis on scientific and rational thinking and practice which they can integrate with their traditional occupations. It should also teach them certain vocational trades which can become a source of supplementary income.

Investment in infrastructure and employment will help in achieving these objectives with more schools, open schools which employ the locals as teachers, trainers, *anganwadi* and *balwadi* workers who can reach out to the rural masses and persuade them to attend schools. Education will therefore become a more meaningful exercise to them and ensure participation.

Vested Interest

With such rampant illiteracy in the country, how-

Reservation: Cure or Malaise?

SUMANGLA KUMAR

The minority V.P. Singh Government's resolve to implement the Mandal Commission Report of the 1980s in a bid to keep up its electoral promises stirred a hornet's nest. There was a spontaneous, apolitical middle class uprising pioneered by students and glorified by the public.

The agitation took a tragic and unhealthy turn. It triggered off a spate of self-immolations by students which spread to schools like forest fire. But the political coarseness and stubborn resolve of the V.P. Singh Government to go ahead with its 49.9 per cent reservation formula against the existing 22.5 per cent was not dampened. The agitation, however, was partially instrumental in bringing down his government. Other political parties played the typical cat-on-the-fence role but at the same time promised to look into its implications. In the wake of political instability the issue was referred to the supreme Court and the matter was thus temporarily shelved.

The Lok Sabha elections in 1991 brought the Congress Government to power with a minority status at the Centre. It held an all-party meeting to arrive at the consensus on the issue. The meeting was conspicuous by the absence of the National Front headed by V.P. Singh—thereby demonstrating the shallowness of its motives.

The Consensus Formula

The Congress Government encashed on the vote-bank which the V.P. Singh Government had tried to create for itself by announcing the new consensus formula on September 23. It went one step ahead from the reservation mooted by the Mandal Commission itself by raising the overall reservations from the existing 22.5 per cent and the V.P. Singh package of 49.5 per cent to 60 per cent. By adding an undefined economic criteria to the reservation of 27 per cent advised by the Mandal Commission to a category termed as socially and educationally backward classes (SBC), the government felt that the issue was settled. To appease the forward community it came out with 10 per cent reservation for the poor among the upper castes. The political functionaries did not even consider the legal obligation under Articles 15(4) and 16(4) of the Constitution and as applied earlier by the Supreme Court in the case of Balaji versus State of Kerala (AIR-1963) to keep reservations below 50 per cent. The matter now awaits the final verdict of the Supreme Court.

Callous Approach

It is, however, strange and sad that even a consensus of political opinion was only meant to minimise political opposition but never came to the brass tacks of the situation. The consensus never questioned the current relevance of the Mandal analysis of the late seventies based on the caste data of 1931 and the report which was published and kept in cold storage since 1980. The government also generates tremendous statistical data on various socio-economic indicators in the country and the first report of the 1991 Census has been published which it totally disregarded.

It is hard to believe that the government is not aware that decisions taken for the world's largest democracy should be based on a systematic analysis of statistics and socio-economic indicators. It is easy to concede though that politicians hold the country to ransom by sidelining the tackling of the main issues which is the very purpose of their existence in a democratic country.

Apathetic Employment Situation

Recently an advertisement announcing 80 vacancies of moderate status in the public sector attracted 40,000 applications. With open competition and no reservations the selection ratio would be 1:500, that is, one out of every five hundred will be selected. With 60 per cent reservation, only 32 seats will be filled up through open competition which could well mean a selection ratio of 1:1000 and above. This indicates the pressure of employment on white collar jobs and the critical position of the educated unemployed.

As per official statistics, 50 lakh people were unemployed in 1951, which went upto one crore in 1961, 2.5 crores in 1981 and 3.5 crores as per latest estimates with an average employment growth rate of per cent per annum against a population growth rate of 2.13 per cent as per the latest census.

On the basis of the 1981 Census, the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) has derived that only 10 per cent of the economy is under the organised sector comprising of services, mining and manufacture and a little part of agriculture. The remaining 90 per cent is in the unorganised sector comprising of agriculture, household industry, trade, professional services, etc. and is in private hands. In the organised sector the public sector accounts for 71 per cent of employment, that is, the public sector merely takes care of seven per cent of the total working population—to a part of which the reservation policy will apply.

Whither Social Justice?

With such disparaging figures of unemployment in the country the reservation policy of 60 per cent, no matter to which class of people it is meant for, cannot be justified under any cannon of social justice. Had the total respondents.

- "Difficulty in understanding the language, dialogues of foreign serials" was the problem of 18 per cent of the total respondents.
- "Some, foreign serials contain obscene/derogatory remarks/scenes which affect the impressionable minds" (23 per cent).
- Another serious objection against foreign serials was that "they are always glorifying Western society and their culture which will adversely affect our children and our youth" (42 per cent).

Music Programmes

MTV, the music TV channel of STAR TV, shows Western music programmes round the clock every day. About 84 per cent of the total respondents had a highly positive opinion about the entertainment potential of MTV programmes. Some 26 per cent found these programmes "highly entertaining" and another 48.34 per cent mentioned that MTV programmes were "entertaining". Only nine per cent explicitly mentioned that MTV programmes were "not so interesting".

On probing into the socio-cultural impact of Western music programmes of MTV, a substantial percentage (60 per cent) of respondents felt that there would be some effect of this kind on our youth. They feared that:

- our younger generation will adopt the Western life style;
- our children will be more inclined to Westernisation, their glamour and emphasis on sex; and
- it will hamper their studies.

Sports Programmes

STAR TV, for attracting larger audience, has an independent channel for sports called PRIME SPORTS, which shows important sports events from all over the world round the clock everyday. Some 62 per cent of the total respondents had been watching PRIME SPORTS programmes with varied frequency of viewing. Some positive reactions mentioned by the respondents were:

- "Coverage of sports events of STAR TV is technically superb".
- "All kinds of sports events the world over are shown in PRIME SPORTS".
- "Latest sports events anywhere in the world are shown live".

Effect on Children

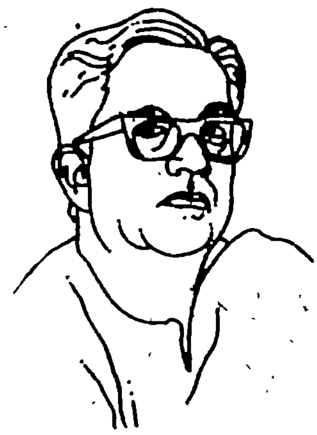
The study also revealed that a substantial proportion of respondents were worried about negative effects of Cable TV on children. Prominent fears in their minds were:

- "Children will be adversely affected" (56.66 per cent).
- "Children's sports activities will be curtailed" (62 00 per cent).
- "Children's reading and other creative activities will be adversely affected" (51.33 per cent).
- "Children will be sleeping late in the night" (46.00 per cent).

The findings of the IIMC study are interesting and call for attention of the professionals in the field of communication. However, as the study was confined to Delhi only, it would be appropriate to obtain a similar kind of feed-back from a cross-section of Cable TV viewers from different parts of the country. ■

AN APPEAL

C. Achyutha Menon Foundation



Dear friend,

C. Achyutha Menon is no more; a matchless statesman, a humanist of impeccable integrity, a champion of the poor and the downtrodden, a writer of repute, he will be remembered for all time.

We propose that a suitable memorial be instituted to cherish the message of his multi-splendoured life.

We request you to actively associate with the endeavour in this behalf and donate liberally to the fund being raised by the C. Achyutha Menon Foundation in furtherance of the above objective.

22-11-1991 Yours sincerely,

K. Karunakaran, E.M.S. Namboodiripad, G. Ramachandran, A.K. Antony, E.K. Nayanar, V.R. Krishna Iyer, Indrajit Gupta, P.P. Thankachan, Benedict Mar Gregoriose, Dr K.N. Pai, Dr K.N. Raj, Laurie Baker, P.K. Vasudevan Nair, Jyoti Basu, Mulk Raj Anand, Aruna Asaf Ali, C. Rajeswara Rao, P.N. Haksar, Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai, Dr M.S. Swaminathan, Prof M.G.K. Menon, G. Parthasarathi, I.K. Gujral, Nikhil Chakravartty, K.R. Narayanan, A.K. Damodaran, K.P. Unnikrishnan, Chitta Basu, P.M. Sayeed, N.E. Balaram, Dr Poulose Mar Gregoriose, Poulose Mar Poulose, V.K. Madhavan Kutty, Dr I.S. Gulati, Dr Sukumar Azhikode, Dr M.S. Valiyathan, Dr P. Basak, Vaikom Muhamad Basheer, Vijaya Kumar (Hind Samachar), *Ali Sardar Jafri, Malcolm Adisheshaiya, Dr C.T. Kurien, Khushwant Singh, Asghar Ali Engineer, S.G. Sardesai, Satyapal Dang, Mohit Sen, Shashi Bhushan, Ghulam Rabbani Taban, R.L. Bhatia, Prof K.N. Panikkar, Adoor Gopalakrishnan.*

All donations, in cheques/drafts to:

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Public Response to Cable TV

R. DYAL

The concept of Cable TV and availability of foreign TV channels via satellite in India are a recent phenomena. Coverage of the Gulf War by CNN showed the potential of "dish antenna" for receiving foreign broadcasts. With the starting of STAR TV (Satellite Television Asian Region) by the Hongkong-based, consortium of companies, the number of households getting hooked to Cable TV, increased tremendously. According to a recent estimate, Cable networks grew from 100 in 1985 to 11,500 in 1991 in the country. Another estimate for Delhi indicates that Cable TV is growing at the rate of 250 connections per day and nearly 45,000 households in the Rs 1500 p.m. plus income got hooked to Cable TV in the last six months.

From October 14, 1991, STAR TV added another channel namely the 'BBC World Service Television'. The BBC (WST) beams live coverage of major news events, spot-reporting and interviews with personalities involved in events. As such BBC could be expected to pose a serious challenge to Doordarshan.

For ascertaining the public perception of and reactions to multi-channel cable television, a study was conducted by the Indian Institute of Mass Communication in Delhi in January 1992. In all 300 respondents selected on random basis from the households hooked to Cable TV receiving foreign telecasts, were interviewed.

Viewership of Programmes

Cable TV facility means access to a large variety of programmes—both foreign as well as Indian. Foreign programmes received through satellite used by STAR TV include entertainment channel (STAR PLUS), sports channel (PRIME SPORTS), music channel (MTV) and, of course, the BBC World Service channel.

In addition to foreign programmes, Cable TV operators also provide the facility of 'VCR Channel' on which they keep showing films (both Indian and foreign) as well as other film-based programmes.

The author is a Research Officer in the Indian Institute of Mass Communication, New Delhi.

The study conducted by IIMC reveals that the viewership of foreign programmes beamed by STAR TV, which include BBC World Service Television also, is substantially large. Anywhere between 55 to 79 per cent of the total respondents have been watching these programmes. Around three-fourth of total respondents have been watching BBC World Service, and serial/feature films shown on STAR PLUS channel. Viewership of sports programmes shown on PRIME SPORTS account for 62 per cent of the respondents. MTV, the musical programmes channel of STAR TV, and perhaps the most popular channel amongst the younger age group, also has substantially large viewership (55 per cent).

BBC World Service accounted for the highest percentage of the total respondents who were watching these programmes "regularly" (22 per cent). Serials and feature films of STAR PLUS channel and musical programmes of MTV also accounted for a significant percentage of regular viewers—14 per cent and 13 per cent respectively.

Viewership of programmes shown on VCR Channel by the Cable TV operators was also very high. Some 88 per cent had been watching Hindi films. The viewership of English films was the second prominent category of programmes with 77 per cent viewership. On the VCR Channel, Chitrahaar (70.99 per cent) based on film songs; devotional programmes (56.65 per cent) and children's films, cartoon films (52.65 per cent) also accounted for significant viewership. Hindi films had maximum (23.33 per cent) regular viewers followed by Chitrahaar (17 per cent) and English films (15.66 per cent). Evidently, entertainment programmes of VCR channel are extremely popular.

News

The concept of satellite broadcasts through Cable TV system started with the coverage of Gulf war in the early 1991 by CNN. In October 1991, STAR TV started showing BBC World Service for 24 hours a day which ultimately led to a tremendous drop in the viewership of CNN. BBC World Service devotes about six hours (out of 24 hours of its service) to news and other related aspects in its 18 bulletins. In BBC World News, a special section is devoted to the Asian region also. The opinion about BBC News Service is both positive as well as negative. Some 58.33 per cent were of the opinion that "BBC News Service has a wide, indepth and balanced coverage". On the other hand, the drawbacks in BBC News Service mentioned by the viewers were:

— "Only the sensational items/issues pertaining to India are covered by BBC" (20 per cent).

— "BBC service has little relevance to Indian viewers" (18.33 per cent).

Serials

Serials are one of the most popular formats for a medium like TV. Popularity of several Doordarshan serials is a pointer towards this. With the advent of Cable TV, access to foreign serials (mainly in English) beamed by STAR TV's entertainment channel STAR PLUS is another challenge for Doordarshan.

While comparing the foreign serials with those of Doordarshan, a very high percentage (80.33 per cent) of respondents agreed to the view that "STAR TV serials are more imaginative and creative in treatment".

— "Foreign serials contain pure humour and thus provide maximum entertainment" (67.66 per cent).

Some 55 per cent found STAR TV serials better as "some of them were based on classics/popular literature".

— "Foreign serials are not relevant to our culture, history, religion and society while most of our Doordarshan's serials are" was the opinion of some 35 per cent of regarded as the best writing on his book. This started a long association between the two, culminating in her being asked to co-edit his collected papers after his death, a project unfortunately left unfinished when Krishna died.

Her international experience began, however, with a post-doctoral fellowship to the MIT in the other Cambridge. A chance encounter with Professor Joan Robinson led to an invitation to Cambridge (UK), as a Fellow of Clare Hall and a position in the Department of Applied Economics there. These were difficult times for her personally, but because of her intellectual prowess and by sheer hard work she earned the respect of all so that her association with Cambridge remained a permanent one, both academic and social. She was one of the most persistent fighters for the Cambridge (UK) view in the intense debate on capital theory that raged between the two Cambridges throughout the sixties and was the centrepiece of economic theorising of those days. However, even during her Cambridge stay she did not ignore Indian issues—publishing her much acclaimed monograph, *Production Conditions in Indian Agriculture*. And her annual visits to Cambridge were occasions when Indian research students there had the opportunity not only to catch up on Indian debates from a most willing teacher but also to be brought into homely contact with their own Cambridge teachers at a level which she alone could make possible.

She returned to India in 1971, first to the Delhi School of Economics and then moving to JNU where she was entrusted with setting up the Centre for Economic Studies and Planning. This Centre which she led intellectually for two decades was to become another consuming passion of her life, competing perhaps unfairly with her only daughter for her affection and tender loving care. What this Centre is now is almost entirely a product of the extraordinary standards of teaching, research, and commitment to students that she set by personal example. This was also perhaps the most productive period of her life, surpassing even her accomplishments abroad, and during which she found time for music again. Her research was prolific, with three books published in 1989-91 alone and one still in press even at a time when her health was failing, and her teaching was legendary.

But most important of all, she was a true feminist in the best sense of the word: her grace under pressure, her empathy to all and particularly to women students, and her totally unassuming and unselfish character despite being one of the giants in her chosen field. She led by the example of her generosity and sheer humaneness, never by advertisement or shallow cleverness. ■

PARANJAPE: Budget for the Haves

(Continued from page 8)

the MNCs. But did this consideration deter our Princes from siding with the East India Company, as long as their personal wealth and privileges were guaranteed? So why should the prospect of economic colounialism deter our ruling circles—politicians, bureaucrats, journalists, academics, industrialists or professionals—as long as they think their passion for *phoren* type living and a power perch can be satisfied? The love that our ruling circles have for the NRIs—and the Communists are no exception—is revealing in this context. For it is the kith and kin of the ruling strata who are already basking in the glory of second-class citizenship (the Green Card) in the land of affluence.

It is only the true socialists who can think correctly about what is really wrong with this Budget. Not this detail or that, but the whole paradigm for India's socio-economic future which the Manmohan Budget represents is wrong if we are to build up a truly egalitarian, independent, democratic India which will sit with honour in the comity of nations. We need not be confused because of what happened in Eastern Europe and the USSR; or what is happening in China. For our inspiration—or resources—did not come from there. Our inspiration has come from Ranade and Dadabhai Naorojee, Tilak and Phule, Gandhi and Lohia. Our roots have been firmly planted in the soil of India; and it is to the poor, downtrodden and presently exploited masses that the socialist movement has been devoted. If we have strayed from our path recently, we can correct our mistake, and again become the champions of the cause of the real proletariat of India.

Dr Manmohan Singh threw a poetic challenge at the end of his Budget speech:

> *Sarfaroshi ki tamanna ab hamare dil mein hai,*
> *Dekhana hai zor kitna baque kaatil mein hai!*
> (We have the zeal of valour in our hearts. Let us now see how powerful are the arms of the killers.)

He has posed this challenge on behalf of the 'haves' of the country who are now unashamedly pursuing their sectional interest, not caring what effect this may have on the living of the common people. He has forgotten that it was not many decades ago that the unarmed and poor people of this great land were made to rise and successfully obtain *swaraj* by a humble 'half-naked' *faqir* and the 'killing' was done without arms. Why is he so sure that a real heir to the Mahatma may not again arise in this land of ours so that the unfinished task of obtaining full *swaraj* for the common people will be completed, whatever the wishes of those who are ready to become the tools of the new imperialists? ■

tremendous changes in the world system. The Cold War affiliations which divided India and Pakistan on a "permanent" footing have now been rendered meaningless. Neither India nor Pakistan can depend on rival superpower support to underwrite their territorial security or integrity. Both—as also other SAARC states—need external help and assistance and loans from bodies like the IMF and World Bank to meet their balance of payments and debt crisis.

Alongside, we must also note the growing political awakening of the masses in South Asia. On one side, this awakening will lead to larger political liberalisation, disarmament, and greater pressure on governments to provide food, shelter, and health services to an overwhelming majority of the world's poor. On the other hand, rising political consciousness is bound to throw up regional and ethnic issues in the pluralist societies of South Asia. Since such issues easily give rise to violence and involve more than one government or party, any attempt to resolve them must also be made on a regional basis. We have passed the stage of infancy to strengthen the SAARC on the basis of collective deliberations at all levels and covering all subjects. That includes, of course, politics. ■

Krishna Bhardwaj

JAYATI GHOSH and ABHIJIT SEN

Professor Krishna Bharadwaj, the founder-chairperson of the Centre for Economic Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University, passed away on March 8 at the age of 56. Her untimely demise is an irreparable loss for not just the economics profession and the entire academic community in India, but also for all those who value a humane approach to life and for whom teaching and scholarship are matters not just of excellence but above all of humility.

Professor Bharadwaj was one of the most eminent Indian economists of her generation and she was recognised internationally as one of the foremost authorities in the field of Classical Political Economy. Her work was remarkable not only for its depth of scholarship but also for its diversity and scope, encompassing all aspects of the subject from grand theory to particular problems of economic development. And, at a time when the social sciences are becoming compartmentalised into narrow specialisations, she was one of those rare economists who attempted to develop an entire unified approach to economic issues and drew particular attention to the extra-economic factors which provide the link between economics and broader social reality. Her life-long enquiry into the methods of the classical masters—Smith, Ricardo and Marx—was not the labour of a historian of economic thought alone, for she firmly believed that their approach to the subject had important methodological lessons for contemporary analysis which had been lost with the rise of the now dominant neo-classical approach

In this, as in many other facets of her life, she fought the mainstream and did so with total humility and complete dedication to excellence even in the face of adversity. Born in 1935, the youngest child of a school teacher in Karwar, her first accomplishments were in music. She won the first prize at the prestigious music festival of the Belgaum Art Circle when she was only 14, and, even more remarkably, went on to win this prize four years in a row. Her talents were noted by such great musicians as Gangubai Hangal and there was disappointment and anger when she decided not to continue in classical music, partly because of her health and partly out of family circumstances. That she then entered economics, a profession with which there was no family connection and which at the time was a male bastion, and obtained the first class first position in her MA from Bombay University were simply the beginnings of what was to be a life of lonely furrows where each adversity was met with an even greater drive towards hard work and the pursuit of excellence.

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UNLIKE many of her contemporaries, Krishna Bharadwaj chose to complete her doctorate in Bombay spurning offers of fellowships from the West, and subsequently joined the economics faculty there. Her Ph.D. thesis, in 1960, was on transport economics, but her break into international recognition, also in the same year and at the age of only 25, was in a totally different aspect of the subject. Her review for the *Economic Weekly* of the Cambridge (UK) economist, Piero Sraffa's path-breaking book, *The Production of Commodities by Means of Commodities*, was a landmark. This was not only remarkable for the clarity of its understanding of Sraffa's important but much misunderstood work and the insight it showed into its profound implications, but also one which Sraffa himself among most South Asian governments. New Delhi viewed it as a mischievous move on the part of smaller nations to embarrass it; Islamabad greeted it as a "Chanakyan design" hatched by New Delhi, while Colombo remained apparently vague.

When, however, the idea turned into reality—and the SAARC took an organisational shape—every effort was made to make it *politically neutral,* but active in *"non-political"* matters such as economic, cultural, scientific and other fields. This was childish. Can any issue—even the abstract ones—be devoid of politics? One wonders. In their first phase, Africans were not unaware of the grave issues that divided them, but they asserted a collective political will over such divisions. The South Asians, on the other hand, have become captives of their own fears and self-doubt.

Yet, perhaps, considering the fractious and violent developments in South Asia, such a phase in the history of regional cooperation was unavoidable. As the two older democracies, India and Sri Lanka, faced unprecedented ethnic and communal violence. In 1987, the Indian military intervened in the Tamil-Sinhala conflict which, though justified by a written agreement between the heads of two governments, resulted in greater bloodshed and alienated both Tamil and Sinhala sentiments against India. Around the same time, India-Pakistan relations plunged into the lowest depths, while continuing violence and terrorist onslaught in Punjab and Kashmir, with allegedly cross-border ramification, discouraged the normalisation of Indo-Pakistan relations.

Also in 1989, India and Nepal clashed over differing interpretations of the earlier treaties on trade and transit. The trends in Indo-Bangladesh relations did not encourage settlement of several issues such as the transfer of the Tin Bigha enclave and the control of water resources.

It is easy to see India as a common factor in all these disputes—and part of the blame must assuredly be owned by New Delhi for unnecessarily needling its neighbours. But, it is also necessary to see that except India, none of the South Asian countries shares a common border nor has close ethno-demographic ties with the citizens of another country. In India's case, these two factors have inevitably given rise to misunderstanding. Secondly, the very size and central location of India in the subcontinent can cause acute psychological insecurity among the smaller neighbours. This insecurity does not grow any the less when some quarters in India talk aggressively—and quite foolishly—about their country's "hegemonic" ambitions.

What is apparent in all this is the fact of interdependence of the South Asian countries in almost every aspect including the fate of democracy and economic well-being of their own peoples. It is true that such interdependence can—and does—give rise to irritations especially when interdependence may look like over-dependence on the part of smaller nations on larger neighbours. Sometime, this may lead to over-emphasis on extra-regional links of a particular country; and sometimes an equally strong stress on the common cultural traits of the South Asian countries. Both attitudes are arbitrary and shortsighted.

Unfortunately, none of us has attempted to understand the *common* as well as the *unique* aspects of the nation-states in the region. We, in India, are fond of drawing attention to the centrality of Indian culture—an attitude that overlooks the influence of other cultures and traditions on the region. Hinduism in Nepal today is different from its original version in the Indo-Gangetic plains. Similarly, the Bengali language as spoken and written in Bangladesh may not be distinguishable from the one prevalent in West Bengal, but the cultures of the two Bengalis across the borders are perhaps as different as those of the Americans from Englishmen. Similarly, Buddhism in Sri Lanka may have originally migrated from India, but it has derived inspiration from a wide variety of other sources as well. In South Asia, cultural diversities as much as their common roots make each nation-state unique in relation to one another.

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ALL this leads me to suggest that a forum which seeks to build closer ties among neighbours must also engage itself in disseminating information—through textbooks, research, films, and telecommunication—to forge cross-country bonds which are less bureaucratic, but far more durable. I, for one, would like to know the unexplained pathos in the folk songs of Bangladesh. Who are the newcomers in Bengali stage and literature in Bangladesh? What exactly is the state of research in economic planning and financial institutions in Nepal? What contributions has the Urdu language made to elite formation in Pakistan? Or, just how do the educational institutions and universities function in all these countries?

In other words, a whole universe needs to be explored. And this task gains urgency in view of

SAARC and Regional Cooperation

ANIRUDHA GUPTA

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) should be discussed as a regional organisation not in isolation but as a link in the chain of a fast-changing world. We cannot visualise—let alone programme—future directions of the SAARC without taking into account the sea-changes that have come about in the character and composition of other regional organisations.

With the collapse of the Eastern bloc and the spread of centrifugal forces in the Soviet Union the hawkish dimensions of West European security too may have diminished. The Group of 12 now looks eastward for larger markets and investments; and, to the extent this succeeds, the economic and political consolidation of the EC would get entangled with unpredictable developments in areas beyond its immediate domain. Would such involvements interrupt or encourage the formation of a supranational state in Europe—economically more influential and politically perhaps no less so than the USA? Would such a formation affect the poorer nations of the world? In particular, what impact would developments in both East and West Europe have on the region of South Asia? Perhaps on all this—and other aspects as well—we can learn from scholars belonging to others Areas and Disciplines.

As one who studied Africa, I have something to say on the Organisation of African Unity. What has always filled me with wonder is the single-minded devotion the Africans had shown in the formation of this continental organisation much before most of them became independent. In May 1963, when the OAU was founded, barely 30 nations had attained independence; today their number has gone up to 52—and all are sovereign and equal members of the OAU. What is much more surprising is that until very recently, the Africans had little knowledge about one another: the Francophone and Commonwealth countries inherited different traditions, cultures and languages, while the great Sahara intervened between the Arab-speaking north and the Bantu-speaking south.

The author is Chairperson, Centre for West Asian and African Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

One can easily find faults with the OAU—and criticise its acts of ommission and commission. But despite uneven sizes, weak administration and artificial borders, African countries have demonstrated that they could exert collective pressure on the world community in their struggle against racial and colonial domination. Though unstable and divided among themselves on many issues, Africans have seldom taken their disputes to the outside world; nor have they allowed the OAU to become a preserve of any single group.

In short, though poor and in many ways dependent on external forces, the Africans have shown a collective political will that has rarely been matched by other Third World regions. We, in South Asia, swear endlessly by our commitment to expand the areas of regional cooperation, but we rush on the slightest provocation to ventilate our grievances against one another in the external fora. We rule out discussion of bilateral disputes at the SAARC on the belief that such an exercise would disrupt regional cooperation. Yet, we do not consider the disruption we cause by raising such issues in other places—and outside South Asia!

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LIKE the OAU, the SAARC too should think of setting up a committee of arbitration, conciliation and mediation and bar no member-state from bringing its dispute with another before the committee. It is neither our—nor certainly the OAU's case—that by such a device all disputes or differences would vanish, but it would certainly prove more effective than the current practice of one member insisting that all bilateral issues be settled bilaterally and another calling for extra-regional involvement in such issues. Both attitudes have harmed the SAARC's potentials as a regional body.

When the idea of South Asian regional cooperation was first mooted, it aroused a great deal of suspicion

I thought this was just a human weakness, that it was only because people had just come out of a difficult war. I thought it would not last forever. But, alas! I wanted to get away as far back as in 1945, but Tito then told me: "The leadership still needs you." The reason for the long delay in my leaving was the 1948 conflict with Stalin. It seemed at that time that my giving up the struggle would be equivalent to betrayal.

What do I think of Stalin? In short, I think Stalin was an ideal Communist figure. Some of his qualities were stronger than Lenin's—a feeling for power, for instance. It has long been known that power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. That is why Tito ended in the same way as Stalin, Mao, Rakosi, Zhivkov, Honecker and Ceaucescu. The same fate awaits all dictators and autocrats no matter however smartly—or, on the contrary, however simply—they may dress themselves to hide their identity. The revolutions in the countries of East Europe were directed against the monopoly of power, because all distortions emanate from this monopoly.

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THREE years ago Milovan Djilas had said:

"The essence of Yugoslavia is in Serbo-Croatian relations. Yugoslavia will be what these relations will be. If nationalism becomes the dominant factor in these relations, the country will inevitably disintegrate."

I ask him about what he had said at that time. What was it—a prediction?

Djilas thinks that this was clear to all for a long time. "But the fact that Yugoslavia should not today have the inner strength to resolve her problems is something which to an extent is humiliating for the country."

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Q. If you had to relive your life, would you live it exactly as you have?

A. If you have in view 1954, I would do what I did then, only perhaps more boldly and with less vacillation....

Q. What do you think of people who with a kind of relish grind their own Communist past in the dust?

A. Yes, I was in the Party, I was a member, but now see the filth...

Q. What do you think of this uncontrolled rush to a universal, collective repentance?

A. I have no faith in such people. This is time-serving of the purest water. Such people use all opportunity to grab new power... And take the flirtation of the newly-turned monks with religion, their march to the churches along with the people. Is this also cleansing of souls? The Church cannot save society, the state, from disintegration. It was always dependent on the Czar, the King, the Supreme Leader.

Q. What in your view is the worst human characteristic?

A. The absence of ideas and ideals.

A. And the best?

A. The ability to stand up to one's convictions.

Q. Destiny gave you the opportunity to meet dozens of extraordinary people. Who amongst them has left the most indelible impression on you?

A. I shall name three persons, but without going into explanations. Okay? For me the three are, Stalin, Churchill and Tito. I shall add one thing—I agree with what Plekhanov once said: History itself creates the personalities it needs. Whatever one may say of Tito now (and my relations with him were of a special kind), he is a personality whom it is impossible to throw out of Yugoslav history.

Q. Do you still believe as before in a socialist future?

A. I believe in a democratic society, where there will be greater social justice, the future of socialism and socialness, but not in a definite form of statehood.

We take leave of each other. My last question was: "You are a writer, a publicist, a journalist. What question would you put to yourself?"

"I would ask myself: What was the sense of your life?"

He thought for a moment, fell silent, and then completed his thought: "And I would not have found an answer. Because the only sense of life—is in life itself." ■

(Pravda, February 21, 1992)

Absolute Power Corrupts Absolutely: Djilas

YEVGENY FADEYEV

Milovan Djilas, who from being a Polit-Bureau member of the Yugoslav Communist Party became 'Yugoslav dissident No. 1', is the author of such books as The New Class *and* Conversations with Stalin. *He was recently interviewed in Belgrade by* Pravda's *Special Correspondent, Yevgeny Fadeyev. The interview has been translated from Russian by Ravi M. Bakaya.*

—Editor

When I told Milovan Djilas that *Pravda* recently published an article in which his name too had appeared, he said: "The last time *Pravda* published an article by me was in 1948, fortyfour years ago. In Yugoslavia itself I was not printed for 35 years. It's terrible to think of it!"

Q. But now you are in great demand. You've been rehabilitated...

A. There is something irrational, something grotesque in this process of rehabilitation. What does it mean to "forgive" a person in the nineties, who had been condemned in the thirties, forties of fifties? The most important thing is that I have been rehabilitated as a writer. After all, I am at heart a literary writer whom fate had drawn into politics.

Milovan Djilas. Close comrade-in arms of Tito. Party Card No. 4. Became a member of the Communist Party in 1932 when he was 22 years old. At the age of 27, while still underground, he became a member of the Central Committee. At 29 he was a member of the seven-member Polit-Bureau of that time. One of the organisers of the anti-fascist uprising in Yugoslavia, he became a People's Hero. Djilas then became a member of the first government of the new republic.

At the beginning of 1954 Djilas, as an ideologue of the Party, published a series of articles in the newspaper *Borba* in which he strongly criticised the bureaucratisation of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and sharply posed the question of the Party giving up its leading role in society. As a result he was dismissed from all posts and expelled from the Party. Then he was imprisoned, spending a total of nine years in jail—or rather twelve, as he had been jailed earlier for revolutionary activity by the King.

Djilas became world famous after the publication in 1957 in the West of his book, *The New Class*. The book was printed in an edition of three million copies in thirty languages. A second best-seller, published after five years, was his *Conversations with Stalin*.

Today Milovan Djilas is 81. He lives with his wife Stefania in the very heart of Belgrade, a few steps away from the Parliament. He is tall, slim and with a shock of grey hair on his head.

Q. You were called 'Dissident No. 1' and a heretic, an orthodox Marxist and an orthodox anti-Communist...

A. And also a revisionist, Trotskyite, an anarcho-liberal and even a fallen angel.

The smile on his face makes him look astonishingly young.

Q. And hence my question: Which of the 'titles' is closest to the truth?

A. I was a believing Communist, with my emotionality which I never tried to hide and which others always felt. To me communism embodied genuine freedom and an inspiring ideology...I am not an anti-Communist, though sometimes I say in a joke that this is even worse than being a Communist. Where do I belong? I belong to the consistent critics of communism. And let me add emphatically that criticism of the founders of communism does not mean under-rating their tremendous political significance. I hear today people say that Lenin is a shallow political figure—the source of all our misfortunes. This is said by people who have malice more than anything else. I don't know of any political figure of the twentieth century greater than Lenin, notwithstanding the fact that I disagree with a number of his ideas. I don't even see anyone who can be compared with Lenin.

Power never carried any meaning with me and communism for me was not a career. After the War ended, the victors began to divide amongst themselves villas, automobiles, orders, titles and privileges, strictly in accordance with their ranks.

keep the organisation going but it also assumed the shape of sheer dacoity. Even now, for instance, in the name of preventing the sale of liquor in the tribal areas, the Naxalites are selective in attacking liquor shops. Contractors who paid them money could carry on their business while the others paid with their lives and depots.

N.T. Rama Rao, as the Chief Minister, first tried to woo the Naxalites as "brothers" promising to promote their cause if they eschewed violence. But within two years he was forced to come down on them with a heavy hand. The Naxalites were then better armed than the police with their muzzle-loading rifles. The Centre was not only cool to NTR's pleas for modern equipment to the State police but also, it is alleged, allowed the Naxalites to establish contacts with the LTTE in adjacent Tamil Nadu and buy automatic weapons from them.

An Appeal

Dear Friend,

Irfan Engineer has been working among Dang tribals for quite sometime. He organised them and fought for their longstanding demands forcing the Government of Gujarat to give a serious thought to the tribals' demands. However, the corrupt forest officials were waiting for an opportunity to take revenge.

On January 2, 1992 Irfan and Virsingh—a tribal—sat on indefinite fast demanding compensation for Tanbai who was killed when the tribals were agitating for their demands and the police opened fire. Also, the fast was undertaken to demand arrest of those forest officers who asked the police to fire without any reason

On January 9, 1992 the Gujarat police arrested Irfan and Virsingh under the NSA and put them in Baroda Central Jail. Undertaking indefinite fast is a perfectly legitimate democratic method. There cannot be a more peaceful protest than this and yet they have been arrested under the NSA. One fails to understand how the NSA can be applied in such cases It is gross misuse of the NSA.

May I, therefore, request you to kindly send a protest telegram to the Home Minister, S.B. Chavan, and the Chief Minister of Gujarat, Chimanbhai Patel? You may also write to Irfan Engineer, c/o Superintendent of Baroda Central Jail, Baroda, Gujarat. I will be highly obliged for this prompt action

With regards,

Yours sincerely,

Irene Cottage
2nd Floor, 4th Road,
Santacruz (East),
Bombay 400 055

Asghar Ali Engineer

PS: There is a reign of terror in the Dang area. Some women have been raped and many in the police custody severely beaten up Please condemn that too.

Dr Chenna Reddy, who had led the Congress-I to victory against the Telugu Desam in the 1989 elections and became the Chief Minister, had an unwritten accord with the Naxalites. In return for support to the Congress-I in the elections, they were to be allowed to operate freely. The justification was that it would induce the Naxalites to give up violence and take to overt political action. One of the Naxalite factions did participate in the elections but its violent activities did not cease.

It is against this background that the phenomenon of fake encounters has again become very common. But the victims in most cases are supporters of the movement and not the ringleaders who elude the police. Indiscriminate raids on villages and wholesale arrest of its male members have been reported. Civil rights activists are singled out for assaults. During a visit to the State last month, I met Dr Balagopal of the Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee. He had been prevented from making an on-the-spot enquiry into the "encounter" in Khammam district and then bashed up in the nearby coal mining town of Kothagudem. According to Balagopal, after his release from police custody, he went to Kothagudem to raise money for a memorial for a civil rights champion killed five years ago. While he was going in a three-wheeler policemen in plainclothes stopped him for interrogation. He was taken into a lane and bashed up. He was heavily bandaged when I saw him in Hyderabad about a week after the incident.

But the Chief Minister wanted us to believe that Balagopal was injured in a scruffle with another person over the division of protection money collected from traders and others in Kothagudem on behalf of the Naxalites. That is the police version.

Balagopal is a mathematician of standing who was on the staff of the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, for several years. He was later a member of the Regional Engineering College faculty in Warangal. He does not conceal his partiality for the Naxalites and argues that human rights advocates cannot be evenhanded in judging the police and their victims. But it is inconceivable that he is a ransom-collector for the Naxalites. ■

Poverty of Naxalite Philosophy

G.S. BHARGAVA

The paradox of the People's War Group of Naxalites in Telengana is the opportuneness of a militant peasant movement and the opportunism of its leadership. Powerful landowners had not only subverted the modest land distribution reform but also persisted with feudal practices like violating the human dignity of the landless labourers and their womenfolk and defrauding them of their wages. With most of the big landowners being Congress leaders and Ministers, the officialdom became an instrument of their exploitation of the poor. The situation was even more acute in the tribal areas with the landed elements preventing the tribals from cultivating the land nominally allotted to them by the government and forcing them to continue as wage labourers at their mercy.

The Prime Minister, P.V. Narasimha Rao, as the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, had set out to implement a land ceiling law enacted in accordance with the professions of his party. But the landowning lobby, backed by his rivals in the party, thwarted the reform and ultimately forced him to resign. Indira Gandhi, who was the Prime Minister then, did not intervene although Narasimha Rao was a loyal supporter of hers.

In the circumstances, an armed struggle against the landowners seemed the only means available to the oppressed. The Communist Party which had waged such struggles in the past was now split into two warring factions—the CPI and the CPI-M—both ultimately drawn into parliamentary activities. The Naxalites initially filled the gap, adopting the Chinese tactics and mouthing Maoist slogans, particularly the one about power growing out of the barrel of the gun. The movement began to spread especially in the Warangal and Karimnagar districts acquiring a reckonable tribal support base.

Kondapalli Sitaramayya, the 74-year-old supreme leader of the Group who is now slated to step down from the top post at the instance of the majority of the Group leaders, had joined it in 1970. He had been earlier expelled from the undivided Communist Party in 1964 for non-ideological reasons and was working as a Hindi teacher at Fatima High School at Kazipet. Subsequently, acquiring a plot of land in Laksetpet in Adilabad district, he became a cultivator. It was during that period that he developed contacts with two local landlords, Narasimha Rao and Sitambara Rao, both Congress leaders. That marked his fray into Congress factional politics.

Narasimha Rao had made use of Sitaramayya's muscle power to settle scores with his party rival. Sitaramayya had already started organising the landless labour and their ranks came in handy in enhancing his bargaining power. His People's War Group started its debut with physical attacks on Communist-Marxist cadres working with the peasantry. The strategy was to eliminate opposition to the Group in organising peasant struggles. The then Chief Minister of the State, Vengal Rao, was pleased at the prospect of elimination of the CPM influence from the villages and connived at the Naxalite activities. As in Calcutta during Siddhartha Shankar Ray's Chief Ministership, mutual killing of each other's ranks by the Naxalites and the Marxists was the order of the day then. But the Marxists, not being terrorists, lost the battle and the field was left free for the Naxalites.

The practice of eliminating Naxalites in fake encounters was also borrowed by Vengal Rao from West Bengal. Scores of Naxalites were killed during the Emergency of 1975-77, with no fear of a public outcry. Although public outrage at the indiscriminate killings earned the Naxalites the sympathy of the local people, it also led to the brutalisation of the cadres. "Kill or be killed" was the only choice. The concept of armed struggle for social justice has in the process degenerated into acceptance of terrorism. Landowners, timber merchants, *tendu* leaf contractors and others who did not pay protection money to the Naxalites were killed. Ransom-taking was rationalised as the means to buy arms and

The author, who was the Principal Information Officer of the Government of India's Press Information Bureau in the late seventies, is the Executive Editor of the periodical, Pulse, *being recently brought out from New Delhi.*

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ask how *Hindutva* would have coped with *Akhand Bharat* containing 30 crores of Muslims? That is why we began by expressing serious anxiety about improper use of words.

It would be erroneous to assume that the mind-set which is labelled by the word 'fundamentalism' is invariably connected with religion. Any rigid dogma can degeneratee into a fundamentalist mind-set crushing liberty and democracy. Fundamentalism can equally express itself in racist terms. The apartheid system in South Africa, in this view of the matter, must be regarded as an expression of the fundamentalist mind-set of White racists there. Hitler's Nazism was also fundamentalist, as it combined racist dogmas with retreat from reason and rationality. In pre-War Japan, Japanese fundamentalism was based on enforcing the Bushido Code; dissidents were persecuted for the crime of advocating 'dangerous thoughts'. The Stalinist persecution equally belongs to the fundamentalist species.

Our own social, political, economic, cultural and moral order is gripped with crisis. The centuries-old tradition, reinforced by a variety of oral traditions, helps our people in maintaining some sort of faith in their future. But this must not be overestimated. Fear and uncertainty is seeping through millions upon millions of people. Our political leadership faces a great challenge to replace fear with hope and this can only be done by combining together the moral, spiritual, rational and scientific universe with which the names of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru are associated.

At this stage one must consider the meaning of the word 'Secularism'. Both fundamentalism and secularism are interacting attitudes of mind in human societies bounded by specificities of their own respective cultures and civilisations. They are not independent variables. In the English language, the word 'secular' means "concerned with the affairs of this world, not spiritual or sacred" and 'secularism' means: "the belief that morality or education should not be based on religion".

Both the words secular and secularism arose as a result of the operation of a universal process which has been in operation in all societies from the dawn of human consciousness. In this connection we would like to draw the attention of our readers to the same column in the September 1991 issue of *Man & Development* entitled, "Men, Events and Processes". By this process, the human mind is able to discern what constitutes the affairs of this world, as distinct from spiritual or sacred. Naturally, the outward expression of the operation of this process of secularisation of the human mind takes

Fundamentalism and Secularism

P.N. HAKSAR

In the charmed world of Alice in Wonderland, words can be made to mean anything. Regrettably, outside that Wonderland, words have to be used with utmost care. The context in which a word arises must be understood if we are to avoid unnecessary sorrow and suffering. Ever since human beings began expressing themselves through words and then language, a measure of sacredness has been attached to a 'word'. According to our own tradition, in the beginning there was 'Word' and that word was *Om*. Great care was taken in articulating the vibrant resonance of *Om*. Similar sanctity attaches to a Muezzin's call: *"Allah-O-Akbar"*. In the Christian system of faith and belief, the second person in the Trinity is 'Word'. When a person makes a statement or promises to do something "upon my word", sanctity attaches to that statement.

We have said enough to make the simple point that 'words' have to be used with utmost care. In order to do so, we must understand the context in which each word arose and the shades of meaning which it acquires through the passage of time. All this might sound somewhat pedantic, but the Information Revolution, which is shaking the world, makes it necessary to point out the dangers involved in our failure to be meticulous, even fussy, about the use of words. In these notes, we are particularly concerned about two words, namely, 'Fundamentalism' and 'Secularism'.

Many dignitaries visiting our shores in recent months, more especially from the United States and the United Kingdom, have warned us about the rise of 'Islamic Fundamentalism'. It is, perhaps, their hope that India's social and political climate might be receptive to their warnings. That hope is not without some basis. That is why it is necessary to examine critically the genesis of the word 'fundamentalism'. How did this word arise in the English language? The *Oxford Reference Dictionary* explains it thus:

> Strict maintenance of traditional orthodox religious beliefs, a religious movement which developed among various Protestant bodies in the USA after the First World War, based on strict adherence to certain tenets (e.g. the literal inerrancy of Scripture) held to be fundamental to the Christian faith.

The *Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences* elaborates the origins of fundamentalism as follows:

> Fundamentalism is the name of an aggressive conservative movement in the Protestant churches of the United States which flourished during the decade after the World War. It manifested itself chiefly in the Baptist, Disciple and Presbyterian churches but received considerable support from other ecclesiastical groups. It was characterised not only by its conservatism with regard to traditional popular Christian beliefs but also by its aggressive efforts to impose its creed upon the churches and upon the public and denominational schools of the country. Its conservative supernaturalism was expressed in the "five points of fundamentalism", which included the doctrines of the inerrancy of the Bible, the Virgin Birth of Jesus, the supernatural atonement, the physical resurrection of Jesus and the authenticity of the Gospel miracles. The first of these points was interpreted by fundamentalism to apply particularly to the Biblical account of the creation of man in opposition to the theory of evolution, which became the central question of the fundamentalist controversy.
>
> The movement was directed against liberal elements within the churches and against purely scientific or secular interests in American civilisation.

It may be noted that fundamentalism as it arose in the USA allied itself to political conservatism against liberal elements within the churches and against purely scientific or secular interests. Enormous pressure was exerted on teachers and schools of a large number of States to purge the textbooks of all references to Evolution and substitute it with Creation. It may be of interest to note that

> in the social sources from which it drew its strength fundamentalism was closely related to the conflict between rural and urban cultures in America. the fundamentalist attitude reflected the distrust of reason and the emphasis upon emotion, the doubt of human ability to solve ultimate problems and the reliance on divine agency which are characteristic not only of much traditional Christianity but also of those groups which have received the least profit from a rationalised culture and of pioneer or isolated rural societies which remain most conscious of dependence for their livelihood on those processes of nature which are least subject to human control. The rationalism and self-reliance of the opposing groups, on the other hand, had been fostered not only by science and education, but also by industrialised culture with its rational and artificial methods of production and its immediate urban environment, all largely subject to human control. (*Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences*, p. 527)

This contribution is reproduced from Man & Development *(Vol. XIII, No. 4, December 1991), the quarterly of which the author is the Editor.*

Record Rs 260 crores foreign exchange turnover by ITC

1990-91 Highlights	
Gross Income	Rs 2316.38 crores
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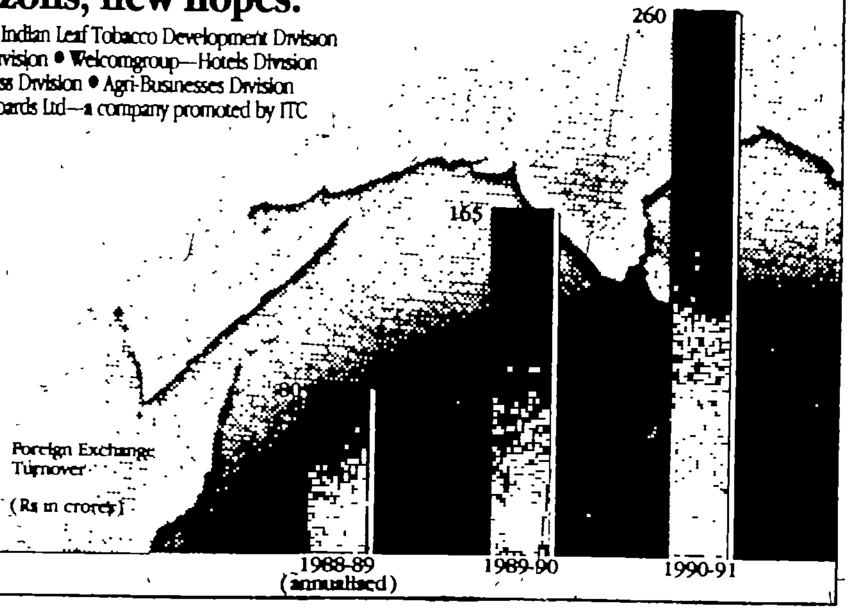

Contract ITC 48 91

adjustment with a human face".

Fatal as it is, this flaw would have been less glaring had Dr Singh sought to appear even-handed in distributing the burden of adjustment and instituted austerity measures of a serious nature. Just the contrary, he has in fact evoked and appealed to the meanest instincts and basest motives such as greed and possessiveness, instead of conveying the message that the rich too (leave alone the rich rather than the poor) have to tighten their belts.

Even worse, he has actually programmed an expansion of the bureaucracy which in neo-liberalism's rhetoric figures so prominently as an evil. Thus he has assumed an increase in the strength of Central Government employees during 1992-93 by as much as 47,000. Although he has not explicitly provided for Rs 3000 crores in the dearness allowance payable to Central employees, there is no reason to believe that a wage freeze is on the cards and that the government has made up its mind to take on the well-organised and articulate sections of the bureaucracy.

Dr Singh could have announced a freeze on all further employment in the Central Government and a plan to replace retiring employees through new recruitment, and thus set an example for the States to follow. This would have substantially reduced the Centre's non-Plan expenditure. But he has failed to do that.

Equally importantly, he has missed an opportunity to launch a large-scale employment generation programme that is calculated to absorb the additional four to ten million expected to be added to the number of unemployed over the next two to three years thanks to structural adjustment. Such a programme would have been the best way of building the infrastructure the country so desperately lacks and whose absence forms the biggest obstacle to the large-scale entry of foreign capital into this economy.

By persisting with his neo-liberal, elitist and myopically Latin American orientation, Dr Singh has only pushed the country deeper into the mire. The Union Budget for 1992-93 may well come to represent the point of no return for the Indian economy. ■

(Courtesy: *The Economic Times*)

ASHOK MITRA: Invoking Bhagat Singh

(Continued from page 6)

rate of growth in recent years, otherwise the index of industrial output is comprehensively down. The service sector is, however, booming. The rich and the affluent *a la* the banana republics never had it so good. And don't you know, gold can now be freely brought in: stagflation affects only the nation's majority, but do they matter?

The pressure is now likely to develop to make the rupee fully convertible and let go of all import restrictions. The Rs 10,000 crores of extra foreign exchange borrowed over the past nine months might then disappear overnight. But the Finance Minister conceivably would not mind being out with a begging bowl once more.

As a self-respecting nation, we cannot afford to default on our external debt servicing; we must therefore borrow further in order to meet our obligations to foreigners. Our self-respect is, however, of a very selective kind: it is not hurt if the nation's major economic decisions are abdicated to foreigners. With no economic planning, we have not the foggiest notion about which direction we are heading. All we know is that the poor and the middle classes are going to face hard times. That, in any case, is the role assigned to them by destiny—they should therefore lump it.

Two additional comments are still worth making. Suppose we defaulted on our debt servicing, would the heavens have collapsed over us? Brazil, for example, defaulted during the last decade, faring no worse as a consequence. They simply had to get the bulk of their money back; so the Fund, the Bank and the private American bankers made special arrangements to keep Brazil afloat and even scaled down some of its outstanding debts. Even if we, because of religious reasons, abjured the path of self-reliance, could we not at least have emulated some of these Latin Americans, which would have entailed a lesser order of abrogation of our sovereignty?

Finally, one wishes that the Finance Minister, in his quieter moments, would seek some forgiveness for the ultimate sacrilege he committed in his Budget speech. He quoted Sardar Bhagat Singh to justify what he was doing. Bhagat Singh sacrificed his life in order that the imperialists could be evicted from his country; the entire thrust of the present Finance Minister's acts is to invite the imperialists and colonialists back. If the effrontery would have no surcease, there should at least be some leftover decency. Or is it already too late for even that? ■

(Courtesy: *The Telegraph*)

year. At the same time, there is a likelihood of contraband capital of the Dawood Ibrahim type intruding into the taking over legitimate business in the country.

However, an even more negative feature of the partial convertibility of the rupee—an euphemism for its further and totally uncalled-for devaluation—is that it will reduce the profitability of exports. If the "free" rate is manipulated so that it is not allowed to exceed the official rate by more than 15 per cent, the exporter's margin will drop in relation to the earlier gain on the sale of the Exim scrip.

At the same time, the use of the "free" rate in calculating import duties will mean that the greater the import intensity of exports, the lower the margin and hence the poorer the incentive to export. This will favour primary commodities exports, which involve virtually no import content, and discriminate against high value-added manufacturers.

There is every danger that the move will encourage a colonial pattern of trade. If one of Dr Singh's principal tasks was to boost exports in a decisive and substantial way, he has evidently failed to do so. The country will in all likelihood experience a slower growth in exports which can only keep the economy in a permanent balance of payments crisis.

The Budget has lowered customs duties on a whole range of products, most importantly capital goods, while raising excise duties across the board. The measure represents a serious menace to a number of capital goods and basic industries including such diverse sectors as metal working, machinery manufacture, electrical engineering and heavy chemicals. It will impose unfair and unequal competition upon them in a traumatic fashion. Some of them could collapse under that pressure.

This protection-in-reverse is reminiscent of similar economic measures taken at the behest of the IMF and the World Bank in Mexico, Brazil and Peru, which resulted in wiping out whole industries which had a great deal of indigenous technical strength. An obsession with getting prices and tariffs "right", by aligning them with "international" or "global" trends, can produce disaster. The Budget shows no signs that this lesson has been learnt at all.

Here, the BHEL is likely to be a test case of sorts. The company—one of the most successful examples anywhere of technological strength and competitiveness in a core industry—is already on the edge of a precipice. Nothing would please Western power generating equipment manufacturers more than the destruction of the BHEL and the elimination of a challenge from a Third World country.

◆

IF the Budget is unbalanced in its treatment of trade and tariffs, it is no less badly flawed in the way it deals with key domestic parameters. It has squeezed the public sector, failed to widen the tax base, cut badly needed spending in social sectors, and actually raised the weight of the bureaucracy in the government.

The squeeze on the public sector, in the form of a drastic Rs 1000 crores cut in budgetary support and the imposition of schemes to borrow from the market, is likely to hit even the healthiest and perfectly efficient units badly. It comes on top of a 37.5 per cent drop in the profits of the PSUs. The effect of Dr Singh's measures will be to lock the public sector into a trap of indebtedness, rapid drop in profits, low investment in technology and general decline. This could pave the way in a matter of a few years for the wholesale liquidation of the public sector.

Dr Singh has no hidden his bias for the affluent to whom he has chosen to pay out something of the order of Rs 1500 crores through reduced taxes. These put India into the category of the lowest taxed among the world's poorest countries. Worse, Dr Singh has taken out about a million people from the tax bracket. Even countries of Western Europe with no pretensions to social democracy or the welfare state and not even Reagan's America could have countenanced the reduction of the income tax base to less than one per cent of the population. Dr Singh has accomplished this in one stroke. Nothing could be more regressive than the reinforcement of a horrendously iniquitous tax system where the rich and the upper middle class pay an increasingly lower proportion of the tax revenue—now down to 10.3 per cent..

Dr Singh has added to the burden on the poor by wide-ranging cuts in spending on health, literacy, education, drinking water supply, family welfare, social security, labour welfare and employment generation schemes. These cuts are as high as 20, 50, even 80 per cent in such important areas as malaria control, land reform, elementary education, drinking water supply, wasteland development and "Operation Blackboard". In doing this, he has shown utter contempt for the idea of "structural

Point of No Return

PRAFUL BIDWAI

When confronted with disturbing evidence of rising tax evasion by business everywhere and of rampant corruption, as in Punjab under the Kairon regime of rapid growth in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Jawaharlal Nehru would say, rather lamely, that the parallel economy has at least the merit of keeping black money within the country: so long as it generated growth, the fruits of the latter could be redistributed under public control.

Manmohan Singh has now broken down the walls which confined black money to the domestic economy. True, the walls became increasingly porous and weak over the past four decades. But by making the rupee partially convertible on the current account—undoubtedly the most far-reaching, if not the most widely expected, measure in the Union Budget—Dr Singh has dealt them a body-blow.

India has been traumatically globalised in a bizarre way: barriers to capital's entry into and out of the country have been greatly lowered. Specifically, in situations of domestic crisis, money can move out precisely when it is most needed here. The LERMS (liberalised exchange rate management system), then, could turn out to be as ungainly as it sounds.

Less than a week after the introduction of the "free market" in convertible currency, this may appear to be unduly pessimistic. Has not the *havala* rate dropped? And is the "free" rupee not stabilising around Rs 29 to the US dollar? But consider the following. The decline in the *havala* rate is probably a function of the lowering of the feverishly high expectations of currency speculators and those eager to invest in housing bonds. The high "free" rate reflects the oversupply of the dollar over the past few weeks. The volume traded (only $25 million a day in the Bombay market as against the normal $300-$400 million a day) is only a small fraction of the normal magnitude and too low to permit the simple conclusion that the present trend represents anything more than a passing phenomenon.

It is still too early to say how the so-called free market will be regulated and on what basis. Whatever happens to it, after the present phase of oversupply it can only work to the extent it is *not* free, or so uncoordinated and anarchic as to defeat its purpose. If the RBI sets the "free" rate too low, the *havala* market is certain to boom. In that situation there will be at least three rates, the official, the "free" and the *havala*, in increasing order of magnitude. As things stand, the growth potential in the Indian economy—and indeed in the more speculative high-profit sectors such as real estate—is too low, the real premium on hard currency too high, and general liquidity far too great for the *havala* rate not to rise to well above 15 per cent or more over the official parity value.

If the "free" rate is jacked up "realistically" to take account of the real premium on hard currency, its effect would be to subsume the contraband trade by assimilating it in content. (Indeed some Carribbean and Sub-Saharan African economies had four, seven, even 11, different rates for the dollar in the 1980s.) The temptation here would be to rectify this situation by returning to a more stable three-rate scenario, which is wholly consistent with the flight of capital through the under-invoicing of exports and other mechanisms which businessmen have elevated into an art.

◆

GOLD imports will boost the *havala* rate. Trade in gold and speculation in currency go together. The channels are common and expectations similar. A simple calculation shows that the present differential between the world and domestic prices of gold can sustain a high *havala* rate of the order of Rs 35 to 38 per dollar—through the spiriting away of money abroad, purchase of gold with convertible currency, and then its sale in the domestic market.

There is no reason to believe that gold imports will significantly reduce smuggling. The volumes expected to be legally imported—about 33 tonnes in 1992-93 according to the Budget—are only a fraction of the 200-300 tonnes of gold that is estimated to be smuggled into the country each

Similarly, the budgetary provision for government hospitals has been cut, but tax benefits have been given for treatment in elite private hospitals and nursing homes. "Fend for yourself" seems to be the message to the poor, be it with regard to employment, education or health. The government has been taxing the middle class for far too long in order to help you. And now, it seems the government has lost its political will and the middle class its compassion for the poor.

◆

THE Budget will certainly sharpen the economic cleavage between the middle class and the poor. This is likely to have its fallout on politics too. In the past 25 years we have seen that there has been political stability whenever the middle class forged an alliance with the poor. Each time the alliance snapped or became weak, instability prevailed. It must, however, be admitted that over the past few years the country's social composition has been changing with the consolidation and proliferation of the middle class. The fact that about 100,000 people came to listen to Nani Palkhivala's discourse on the Budget in Bombay shows the extent of middle class proliferation. Such a huge crowd must be the envy of any political leader.

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The politics of many advanced countries have their moorings in the middle class. For instance, the poor do not figure in the political calculations of the US Republican Party or the British Conservative Party. These parties have lost power only when the middle class has been disenchanted by them.

If the present Budget is repeated a few more times it will certainly render the Congress party the Republican or Conservative equivalent in India. But since its inception more than 100 years ago the Congress has tried to reconcile the interests of the middle class and the poor. Perhaps the party leadership now feels that it can no longer carry the burden of the poor; it has therefore decided to go with the middle class.

But it is not time yet for middle class based politics to become viable in India. The Budget, with its emphasis on the share market, caters to the needs of only a narrow section of the middle class. The share markets are all concentrated in the big cities. A lawyer in a mofussil court may not easily bite Manmohan Singh's bait to speculate at the share market. The picture emerging from the 1991 Census clearly indicates that the expansion of the business and industry-oriented middle class has slowed down considerably in the nineties. There has only been an insignificant shift in the labour force from agriculture to non-farming sectors since 1990 and the rate of decennial growth of urbanisation has decelerated from 46.14 per cent in the eighties to 36.19 per cent in the nineties.

The social composition of the population also suggests that what is "good politcs" and "good economics" for Bombay may not necessarily be true for most parts of the country. The political economy should be aimed at reconciling the interests of Bombay with those of the less fortunate parts of the country. A political economy that sharpens the divide between the business-oriented middle class and the rest of the population cannot bring stability to the country.

Moreover, this kind of an economy cannot sustain middle class dreams for long. Even the American dream is crumbling because the US economic regime did not promote a productive ethos. What happens when the Indian middle class dream is shattered?

It is, however, to the Congress' credit that by tilting to the Right with regard to its support-base, it has dislodged the BJP from the social and political space it had begun to occupy. The pull of the share market is proving to be stronger than the pull of the Mandir, at least for the time being. ■

Appropriating BJP Base

KEWAL VERMA

It is not certain whether Dr Manmohan Singh's Budget will help moderate inflation and revive industrial production. But he has certainly succeeded, and admirably so, in appropriating the middle-class support base of the BJP. The Mandir issue, which dominated informal discussion in offices and middle class homes last year, has been replaced by discussions on the likely impact of the Budget on the share market. The current infatuation for the market in the BJP's recently-gained middle-class support-base is reflected in the different voices of the party leaders, who often contradict one another on the implications of the Budget. Those grounded in the BJP ideology are critical of the Budget while those who are more responsive to the party's support-base are appreciative of it.

The shift in the middle-class support occurred as the market-friendly economic package began to unfold. The results of the Bombay municipal elections are a clear indication. The Budget has further induced the Hindu middle class to discard the saffron flag and once again turn to the Congress tricolour. This further shift in middle-class support would be apparent if the long-overdue elections to the Delhi Assembly and corporation were held at the earliest. There is no reason why the Congress should not sweep the elections in this BJP stronghold.

Though the economics of the Budget is hidden behind technical details, its purpose is clear; the consumption level is not to be affected. Excise duties on consumer items have not been raised nor has the government reduced the revenue expenditure that sustains its consumption level. The shareholding of existing companies has been made more attractive through changes in company taxation and wealth tax. For people with an annual income of more than one lakh rupees tax incentives for savings have been withdrawn with a view to pushing them to the share market. It is indeed a shareholder's Budget. And the gamble-shy middle class is being induced to learn to take the risks of the market. At the same time, the state's capability to intervene in the market and its command over the nation's resources are being reduced.

◆

THERE is nothing in the Budget to suggest that it will have a salutary effect on inflation. The fiscal deficit has been reduced by cutting capital expenditure while the revenue deficit level, which is relevant for inflation, remains unchanged.

The Budget scheme also does not provide for a cushion to absorb the disastrous effects of a drought on the price level. And the cut in capital expenditure is likely to aggravate industrial recession. Yet there is a boom in the share market today; the middle class has clearly been bitten by the speculation bug.

The Budget's social and political message is perhaps more important than its economic message. In a recent interview Manmohan Singh succinctly said the Budget's aim was to ensure "people become rich by staying honest". This message, which has a Thatcherite ring to it, has a special moral appeal for the middle class. But the road to affluence chalked out by Dr Manmohan Singh is one of speculation, not of hard labour and productive intelligence. Get-rich-quick will therefore become the dominant ethos of the middle class.

Only time will tell whether this will help build an internationally competitive economy. But till recently, buying of shares by individuals was not fashionable in a lately industrialised country like Japan; the bulk of the country's savings was with the secure and non-speculative post offices.

By cutting outlays on anti-poverty programmes and social sectors like education and health, the Budget encourages the middle class to believe that it has done more than its duty towards the poor. The nation's slogan of "wiping out the tears from the eyes of every poor" is now being substituted with "help those who can, to become rich". For Gandhiji, concern for the poor was a matter of commitment. But for the promoters of the reform package, it is a matter of convenience.

Thus even when the poor are being crushed by as much as a 50 per cent hike in foodgrain prices in the past two years, the budgetary shield that protects them from the onslaught of the market has been made less effective. Only 700 million man-days will be created next year under the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana against the 900 million this year and only 1.88 million rural families living below the poverty line will receive assistance against the 2.25 million this year.

departmental needs to import the essential commodities, namely, life saving drugs, crude oil, diesel, kerosene and fertilisers as authorised by the Government of India."

Very strangely, "in respect of capital account, all inflows and outflows including the government requirements will be at market rate," as per the press statement, though "the inflows and outflows under the IMF will also be under the official rate". This means even the repayment of the World Bank loans will be at the market rate of exchange.

This is inexplicable, and certainly a matter not clearly thought through. The Budget for 1992-93 provides for Rs 6802 crores as the payment of interest and repayment of "official" capital during the year. At around 25 per cent premium, this would mean an additional payment of more than Rs 1700 crores (in terms of rupees) for which no budget provision has been made.

The total of departmental needs, fertiliser imports and import of oil products is estimated to require some Rs 19,000 to Rs 20,000 crores of foreign exchange funds at the official rate.

Exports during 1990-91 were Rs 32,553 crores and assuming exports to grow at a compound rate of 20 per cent and adding some Rs 4000 crores of inward remittances, etc., we get a total of Rs 48,500 crores approximately as the total current receipts in 1992-93. At 40 per cent of this amount, the foreign exchange availability—at the official exchange rate—would be Rs 19,400 crores, just barely enough to cover the imports specified.

Thus, the Government of India would have to depend on the support of the IMF/World Bank for even the repayment of past debt obligations, for 60 per cent of all other receipts would be available for commercial imports. If debt servicing is to be met from this amount—as currently stated—there would be an inevitable increase in the free market price of foreign currency, and an import compression determined by the "market" based on the increasingly inequitous distribution of income. The viability of the programme launched on Budget day thus depends on either continued borrowing even to repay our past debts, thereby significantly increasing our medium-term indebtedness, and making economic policy subject to the dictates of the IMF/World Bank in the coming years, or a severe compression of essential imports, leading to an accentuation of industrial recession. Imports—even crucial bulk imports like non-ferrous metals—as well as all capital goods and essential raw materials and components, would have to be at significantly higher free market rates than forecast earlier. This would certainly have a cost-push effect on prices, coming on top of increases in excise duties, railway freight rates and administered prices of basic intermediates like coal and steel.

◆

IN his Budget speech while presenting the 1991-92 Budget, the Finance Minister had announced an "amnesty scheme" for tax evaded incomes, and said he was giving a "last chance" to tax evaders to come clean, adding that severe steps would be taken against tax evaders who do not come forward to declare their untaxed incomes, after the expiry of the amnesty period. This year, not a word is said about black money. In fact, the effort is to condone black money, reward criminals and smugglers, reduce tax rate, and hope for the best.

The scheme for gold import, in the above context, is an attempt to regularise the income of smugglers (who do not have to pay any income tax on gold import related incomes). Looked at from another viewpoint, this gamble is like a safety-valve for the decision to make the rupee partially convertible. Gold, which will now be imported (ostensibly by Indians returning from abroad) is likely to bring Indian gold prices nearer international prices of gold, and the free market exchange rate of the rupee could then be kept down to reasonable limits, in tune with the difference of 25 to 30 per cent between the international and Indian prices of gold. But as long as Indian gold prices remain higher than this level, inward remittances would be siphoned off to be used for import of gold ostensibly by Indians returning from Dubai.

A genuine restructuring of the economy, through a massive effort at universal education and better health services, at local area development planning in rural areas, is far from the agenda of the present government. Indeed, the entire focus is on the premature "globalisation" of the economy, in the interest of the Westernised upper crust of Indian society, a section of the people for whom the present policies are a bonanza, enabling this class to appropriate all the benefits of aid and adverse trade, at the cost of the improverishment of millions of workers, small farmers, landless labourers and small craftsmen. ■

At the Cost of Impoverishment of Millions

ARUN GHOSH

The Central Government's Budget this year has been the occasion for announcements of an unprecedented nature. The rupee has been made partially convertible in the Budget speech—and import of gold by NRIs and Indians returning from abroad has been permitted, subject to the payment of an import duty in foreign exchange. Compared to these momentous policy announcements, the details of the management of revenue and expenditure in the Central Budget have become a somewhat humdrum affair.

But let us start with the Railway Budget for 1992-93, for that sets the tone for the Central Budget. Apart from the hike in freight rates—other than on certain specified commodities—passenger fares have been increased steeply, the heaviest burden being on commuters to metropolitan areas, the increase for some distances being as much as 60 per cent. Second Class long distance passenger fares have also been increased significantly; the increase in Second Class rail fare from, say, Delhi to Baroda, or Delhi to Patna works out to some 17 per cent of extant fares.

But more importantly, there is to be a net transfer of funds from the Railways to general revenues, in lieu of budgetary support for Railway modernisation and expansion, as has been customary in the past. The budgetary support for the Railway Plan has been cut from Rs 1672 crores in 1991-92 to Rs 1200 crores in 1992-93—a reduction of Rs 472 crores. On the other hand, apart from the normal dividend by the Railways to general revenues—which increased from Rs 1039 crores in 1991-92 to Rs 1150 crores in 1992-93—there is additional provision for the payment of deferred dividend in 1992-93, to the tune of Rs 416 crores, thus making the total dividend payment by the Railways to the general revenues Rs 1566 crores. Thus, from a net transfer of Rs 633 crores, from the Budget to the Railways in 1991-92, there is going to be a reverse transfer of Rs 366 crores from the Railways to the general revenues in 1992-93.

The author, an eminent economist, is a former Member of the Planning Commission.

Equally pernicious is the cut in the amount that the Railways are to be allowed to borrow from the market—obviously keeping in mind the need to lower the 'fiscal deficit'—from Rs 1500 crores in 1991-92 to Rs 1200 crore in 1992-93. As a result, the Railways Plan outlay is going to record only a nominal increase of seven per cent (from Rs 5325 crores in 1991-92 to Rs 5700 crores in 1992-93), when the rate of inflation in the country is expected to be significantly higher. In real terms, therefore, there will be a decline in the Railways Plan outlay for modernisation and improvement of the services, despite an increase in passenger fares and freight rates.

This point has been laboured here in some detail because the same approach informs the pattern of Plan outlay, and therefore, the shape of the economy in the years to come. The focus in the 1992-93 Budget (as also in the diverse other economic policies announced with the Budget) is on rapid 'globalisation' of the Indian economy, to the neglect of the development of the infrastructure, as well as social infrastructure like universal education and health, of the development of the backward sections who have for some time been getting increasingly marginalised, leading to the emergence of social tensions all over the country.

◆

TO return to the Budget for 1992-93, the specific directions in which the economy would be moving over the coming years need to be briefly explained. First, the partial convertibility of the rupee—to the extent of 60 per cent of export as well as 'invisibles' earnings—implies in effect a partial devaluation of the rupee (without a conscious, overt devaluation). One can predict that in the immediate future, the exchange rate for the segment of transactions with the rest of the world may be settled around the present *havala* rate, that is, at around 25 per cent higher than the official exchange rate. As per a Finance Ministry press note, the balance of 40 per cent of export (and invisibles) earnings would be used to pay for "government

India-Pakistan ● Letter to PM ● Central Asia ● China

Mainstream

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POLITICAL NOTEBOOK

Exit Solanki

The resignation of the External Affairs Minister, Madhavsinh Solanki from the Council of Ministers has once again brought the Bofors issue into the focus of public scrutiny.

The scandal flowing from the massive sum involved in the illegal bribery rocked the country and Parliament in the late eighties and substantially contributed to the inability of the Rajiv Gandhi dispensation to secure a clear majority in the 1989 Lok Sabha poll. The National Front Government led by V.P Singh had promised to unravel the mystery surrounding the Bofors middleman on coming to power but its failure to do so generated considerable scepticism in the minds of the public at large.

Nevertheless, it needs to be underscored that V.P Singh and his colleagues in the National Front Ministry initially did try to conduct the probe into the sordid affair with earnestness and zeal, but they were preoccupied with a host of difficulties and hamstrung due to constant barracking by the Rajiv Congress However, it must be reiterated that in his first statement on the subject in Parliament in early 1990 the then Prime Minister had conclusively brought to light the attempted cover-up by those in power when the deal was struck

The latest developments are more revealing as they point to a concerted move to scuttle the Bofors investigation by important personalities in the Union Government today. It is matter of concern and shame that the person in charge of the External Affairs Ministry has been caught red-handed and was forced to quit his post in less than 24 hours of his public confession that he had personally handed to Rene Felber, his Swiss counterpart, at Davos two months ago, a mysterious memo from a "private lawyer" whose name he could not recall! But even if the former Gujarat Chief Minister deserves to be censured, he is actually being made a scapegoat. There is not a shadow of doubt that several other prominent figures are also actors in the drama

The government's duplicity too cannot be concealed. It took a public posture of wanting to pursue the investigation, as seen from the CBI communication to the Swiss authorities on March 26, while in private everything was done to ensure that the probe fizzled out. It is not without significance that the Congress-I spokesman had demanded an end to the probe on the amazing pretext that it amounted to wastage of public money!

While the media needs to be commended for the yeomen service it has rendered in exposing the misdeeds of the powers that be in this kickbacks scandal, the government at the Centre must realise that Solanki's exit does

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not close the chapter on the Bofors case. The ghost of Bofors would continue to haunt it unless it is able to exorcise it.

The allegations of the Hindujas' involvement in the deal are now acquiring concrete shape. It needs to be pointed out that Solanki is not the only Union Minister serving the Hindujas, other leading lights in the present Establishment are also playing the same game. Probity demands that they be brought to book at the earliest.

April 1 *S.C.*

COMMENTARY

India is Not for Sale!

It was a rally with a difference. Countless people thronged the Boat Club on March 27 to take a solemn pledge to fight the government's capitulation before the multinationals. The congregation resolved to "boycott the products manufactured by the multinational companies... and use more and more *swadeshi* goods".

The massive rally was sponsored by the Azadi Bachao Andolan, a platform set up by Gandhian socialists who met recently at Sevagram to issue a clarion call for a renewed freedom struggle in the golden jubilee year of the 1942 "Quit India" movement to "liberate India from multinational colonisation". The participants came from all parts of the country—Kerala and Punjab, Bengal and Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, UP, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Assam.

A galaxy of eminent socialist leaders, including Rabi Ray, Kishen Patnaik, George Fernandes, brought into focus the ideals of Gandhi, Lohia and Jaya Prakash; recalled the 1942 and 1975-77 struggles; and urged for a new initiative to launch a fresh movement for national regeneration. George was at his eloquent best and warned the IMF-World Bank combine that enslavement of the government and officials should not be misconstrued as enslavement of the country whose people would resist any encroachment on national self-respect. Rabi Ray characterised the administration at the Centre as a "government of national shame" and demanded a speedy reversal of its suicidal policies.

The gathering was marred by an unseemly incident in which a section of the audience tried to denigrate a senior leader—the former Union Finance Minister in the National Front Government. George spiritedly defended the honesty, integrity and sacrificing spirit of Prof Madhu Dandavate, and decried the attempt in no uncertain terms. However, he struck a self-critical note with refreshing candour by acknowledging the failure of the National Front rule at the Centre to prevent the entry of the multinational concern—Pepsi Cola—into India despite its prior promise to the contrary. But regardless of the past he reiterated his firm resolve to steadfastly oppose and fight the multinationals' depredations in the days ahead.

The memorable rally secured poor publicity as the media betrayed a strange myopia. But its impact was felt far and wide.

It was a living testimony of the awakened consciousness of the country's patriotic forces to defend the nation's political sovereignty, economic autonomy and cultural identity threatened by the multinationals' invasion on the pretext of liberalisation of the economy.

And it proved beyond doubt that India, unlike the Latin American states, is not for sale despite the dubious moves of our Union Government in conjunction with the World Bank lobby in the Finance Ministry to woo foreign capital.

April 1 *Charvak*

A Purposeful Visit

SUMIT CHAKRAVARTTY

The visit of the Ukrainian President, Leonid Kravchuk, to India (March 25 to 29, 1992) and his in-depth discussions with the Indian leaders including Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao have opened a new chapter in bilateral relations between the two countries.

After the birth of independent Ukraine following the historic referendum there on December 1, 1991 that heralded the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the eventual evolution of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the leaders of that country in general and Kravchuk in particular have used every possible opportunity to express their intention of forging close ties with India. India does indeed occupy a special place in the hearts of the Ukrainians and there is a kind of national consensus among different sections of the Ukrainian populace cutting across political barriers to reinforce Indo-Ukrainian ties. It was not without reason that even the leaders of the nationalist 'Rukh' movement in Ukraine categorically stated that they were inspired by the values of the Indian freedom struggle led by Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. The Ukrainian authorities conveyed their keenness to develop warm relations with India to our Foreign Secretary, J.N. Dixit, who was in Kiev last January (when he was able to call on Kravchuk as well). This time in New Delhi Kravchuk gave further testimony of that desire and imparted concrete shape to it by concluding several agreements on cooperation in diverse fields.

One of the highlights of Kravchuk's visit was the signing of the Indo-Ukrainian Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation which reflects the spirit of the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation signed in 1971 for a period of 20 years and renewed for another 20 years last year before the demise of the USSR at the fag end of 1991. It is noteworthy that Ukraine has become the first independent country emerging out of the debris of the erstwhile Soviet state to conclude such a Treaty with India.

It needs to be understood that this Treaty while reflecting the spirit of the 1971 Indo-Soviet Treaty is not a replica of that document which constituted the bedrock on which Indo-Soviet friendship was deepened and expanded in the last two decades. That is precisely because the vast changes the world has undergone in the last two years with the transition from Cold War confrontation to superpower cooperation had to be taken into account while drafting the Treaty. But what endows the Indo-Ukrainian Treaty with exceptional value is the fact that it commits each side not to do anything which could undermine the security of the other. The two states have also decided, through Article VIII of the Treaty, to be in touch with each other on the political and defence planes in order to preserve political stability in their respective regions, something that would positively contribute towards international stability as well.

In this sense this Treaty would serve the interests of both India and Ukraine whose avowed intention of being neutral in the global arena meets the objectives of India's non-aligned policy. Interestingly, a recent article by noted journalist Sergei Strokan in the widely circulated Russian weekly, *Moscow News*, had, while noting Ukraine's initiatives in building close ties with India, made the following valuable observation: "The Ukrainian draft of the bilateral treaty proposed to India, unlike the Russian draft treaty, is in the same spirit as the 20 year Indo-Soviet Treaty which worked well, and keeps in mind Indian defence interests."

The significance of that observation became all the more transparent when the Ukrainian President declared at a press conference in the Indian capital on March 27 that since Ukraine held an important position in the former Soviet Union's defence relationship with India, it would not terminate cooperation in that sphere. Rather, that would become a vital component in the wideranging interaction between the two countries with Ukraine continuing to supply defence spares to India, as it did when it was a part of the old Soviet Union. What was important was his emphasis, in this connection, on India's policy aimed at strengthening peace and security in the region and the world at large. This became more meaningful in the light of Kravchuk's repetition of the basic principles of the historic Delhi Declaration of 1986—those of a non-violent and nuclear weapons-free world—and his assertion that Ukraine would remove all nuclear weapons from its soil.

Kravchuk's two-hour talks with Narasimha Rao revealed the two countries' similarity of views on a host of issues. His high appreciation of Indian non-alignment and projection of the necessity of following a policy free of military blocs—a concept shared by the leaders of Belarus and Kazakhstan, but not Boris Yeltsin and his team of Bush-followers in Moscow's White House—coupled with his stress on inviolability of borders and territorial integrity, his strong opposition to the use of terrorism as a means to resolve disputes like the Kashmir problem (which, he felt, should be settled peacefully through bilateral negotiations as suggested by New Delhi), his full support to the efforts of India and China to settle the outstanding border question—all carried considerable weight. His favourable response to President R. Venkataraman's offer of Indian expertise in running the mixed economy Ukraine had opted for, was also noteworthy.

The agreements on cooperation in trade, economy, science and technology, as well as culture signed during the visit would go a long way towards promoting bilateral relations to a qualitatively new level. There is considerable scope for the growth of Indo-Ukrainian trade in the days ahead. Ukraine is keen to purchase from India mineral fertilisers, tea, coffee, medicines and raw materials; while India is interested in buying urea, ammonia, metal scraps and hot rolled steel products from Ukraine. It has been decided that trade would be in hard currency as well as other modes of exchange agreed upon through mutual consent.

Kravchuk's hope that the Indo-Ukrainian agreements concluded during his trip to this country would help stabilise the economic situation in Ukraine was not without meaning. The visit by the head of one of the most prominent republics of the erstwhile USSR has given fresh evidence of the abiding nature of India's multifaceted ties with different segments of the former Soviet state that continue to survive despite the current turmoil in that vast land-mass and the radical transformation of the international scenario. ■

We Shall Overcome!

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

A refreshing breeze indeed. In the midst of all the dirt and squalor, hatred and violence, tensions and clashes that pervade between the two neighbours, the spontaneous euphoria that welled up in our country the moment it was known that Pakistan had lifted the World Cup trouncing England, was heart-warming by all counts.

I am no cricket addict and I can tell you nothing about the mysteries of the game or about the respective merits of rival teams and the players. Naturally, I am overjoyed when I see Sachin Tendulkar wielding the bat as I used to when Sunil Gavaskar was in action. Kapil Dev I look forward to. In my school days, I remember watching Dilwar Hussain fighting back an English team led by Gilligan. Ranji and Duleepsinghji were legends whom I had not seen. The favourite in Calcutta was Mushtaq Ali. We used to see Bradman's face in the newspapers—there was no live radio commentary in those ancient days, and the television was beyond our imagination.

As I watched people in different parts of the vast city of Calcutta celebrating Pakistan's victory, I thought to myself why and how this came about. I have seen in the past how tension mounts and the people get divided when Indian and Pakistani teams face each other in any game. This is not confined to Srinagar, but could be seen in Surat and Moradabad, Delhi and Hyderabad. Only last year communal vandalism spoilt the pitch in a Bombay stadium to bar Pakistan playing in India. How then is this transformation today?

Surely, Imran Khan emerged as a great leader who could invoke the best out of every member of his team—like an Alexander or a Napoleon in the battlefield. And his team also played magnificently which even an unversed like me could get excited about. But does the superb performance of the Pakistani team account for the instant exultation among all sections in Calcutta, or for that matter, in most of the cities in our country?

No, there is something more to it. Imran himself said his team's victory is a victory for the entire subcontinent. He said this in so many words:

> This cup that we have brought today with us is for the entire subcontinent—for Pakistan, India and Bangladesh. I know people in India and Bangladesh have great love for us. They appreciated our performance, prayed for us That's what really matters

One may say Pakistan's victory was a victory for the continent of Asia itself. The game which our White masters of yester-years used to claim as their heavenly gift to civilisation, is now mastered by the people who are not White, and who had been kept down in subjugation by the Whites for a century and a half.

But I would go further. The meaning of this unbounded enthusiasm cannot be measured as having a mere geographical dimension: It is the upsurge of the heart of the millions upon millions of our two countries. As a young airline officer on duty at the Calcutta airport thought aloud to me: "If we had not had the partition what an invincible team we would have had which nobody could have ever dared to trounce!" Here is the sentiment of the common humanity in our two countries, pristine and transparent, that is latent all over.

◆

MY ancestral home was in Barisal, the waterlogged district of south Bangladesh. I was brought up in Calcutta, and now for the last forty years, I have been living in and working from Delhi. When I was eight years old, I went to Lahore with my grandmother—faint memory of a clean and beautiful city. I am a bit of a nomad and my wanderlust has taken me to many parts of world. In 1983, when I got a chance, I spent a fortnight in Pakistan, travelling by train, air and bus—Lahore, Karachi, Mohenjodaro, Islamabad, Peshawar, Khyber Pass, Gilgit and Hunza, Quetta and Ziarat. What was my impression of that opening into my neighbour's land? Without knowing a word of Urdu, I met them, hundreds of them, as if they were my own—I could feel the old generation is nostalgic about India and the young are curious. Incidentally, although I have never met Imran Khan, I have recently got acquainted with him through his book on the land and the people that live by the great Indus as it flows from the high Himalayas to the Arabian Sea—an unforgettable experience that takes you to the roots.

As a young reporter, I had covered the ghastly nightmare of the partition in which brother slaughtered brother in a fury of political insanity—from the Great Calcutta Killing to the heart-rending trek of refugees. And I was also a witness to the heart-lifting glimmer of hope that Gandhiji sought to bring through his crusade for communal brotherhood in Beliaghata and Bihar. He would have taken it to the heart of Pakistan as he had done in Noakhali if he had not been slain by one of his own countrymen. Fortyfive

(Continued on page 35)

Restore Consensus, Pull Back from the Brink

Letter to PM on New Economic Policy

SHYAM NANDAN MISHRA

The following is the text of the letter sent by the former External Affairs Minister to the Prime Minister on February 26, 1992. In view of its importance it is being reproduced in full.

—Editor

Dear Congress President and Prime Minister,

I am writing this letter after a great deal of cogitation lasting long, but now with a compulsive feeling that any further reluctance to do so would amount to sinning by silence or, at any rate, playing safe when history demands a decisive role.

What follows is the unburdening of the agony of a Congressman of old genre and perhaps, on that account, a little out of date. That he belongs to the Gandhi-Nehru tradition may be a tall and undeserving claim, but the pretension has lasted too long to be eschewed.

The period since the introduction of almost seismic change in economic policies has, indeed, been traumatic for many of us and we would be less than honest and lacking in essential courage if we did not warn in time that the Indian *perestroika* might prove even more disastrous than the Russian one and both our economy and polity may be in a state of roaring anarchy and confusion.

No doubt, you have as much claim to the old heritage of the Congress as many of our generation have but it seems your active association with the more "modernised version" of the Congress has brought about a somewhat different orientation in your perception and approach. In our case, however, disengagement from the past is not proving as easy and if the recent developments in the economic field have caused us great anguish and pain, the fault lies in our genes.

Tragically, our suppressed and unmanifest dissatisfaction and concern is being interpreted as our implicit support and endorsement little realising that our silence is imposed or involuntary. We have no forum where we can express or exchange our views. I wrote you to this effect more than four months ago and asked for your guidance in this regard but drew a blank. Those fora which have existed since the inception of the Congress have been closed or denied to us even as far-reaching decisions affecting the country's polity and economy are being taken. In fact, the decisions taken at the governmental level are so unilateral and arbitrary that they nearly border on the attitude of the French monarch who declared: "I am the State." What else can one conclude when an apex body like the AICC, which alone can give legitimacy to our policies, is sidelined and the Congress Parliamentary Party is bypassed while announcing the new policy in Parliament. Surely, your excellent memory could not have failed to recall that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru did not take any major decision as the Prime Minister before consulting the AICC. And this body, on its part, never shirked in its duty to express its views freely and frankly, without fear or favour. Even momentous resolutions on the "Quit India" movement and the "Partition" were not passed without encountering determined opposition or eloquent neutrality.

In the present context, the dimensions and implications of the changes, in particular, enjoined upon the leadership a clear duty to organise a flood-tide of discussions at all levels of the organisation as also a national debate involving all principal elements in public life. But the total absence of these categorical imperatives has destroyed both the domestic and national consensus on economic policies and left the country and Congressmen completely dazed and bewildered. Our dismay is all the greater because you have inexplicably chosen to keep this most fateful of all issues out of the area of consensus which you are passionately pledged to seek on all major national issues.

All this notwithstanding, brash assertions are made by government spokesmen that there are no reservations on the issue inside the Congress. To say the least, to make such a claim after having slammed shut all doors of dissent and disapproval and denying all opportunities for suggesting an alternative to the policy you have adopted is nothing short of sadistic. Moreover, if as claimed, there are no differences of opinion among Congressmen even when such U-turns in our policies put the historical process in the reverse gear, surely the soul of the Congress with its high tradition of dissent and democracy is gravely sick and something needs be done urgently to revive it.

Fortunately, the official complacency in this regard does not coincide with the reaility. For the polarities of opinion could not be wider and the sense of values never so antithetical in any organisation. To wit, what we call a new bondage, a new slavery and a recolonisation, the Finance Minister (Government) calls a war of economic liberation or perhaps the widening of freedom through globalisation; while we lament the erosion of our economic sovereignty and political independence with each 'advice' from our invisible masters, there is official jubilation on loans, more loans, debts, more debts from our benevolent creditors.

The psychology of treating loans as gains is a short step to permanent debt-entrapment and, at this rate, we will soon become perpetual supplicants revelling in the wages of the new slavery as we did before Gandhi descended upon the scene. And what is even more frightening is the seminal issue whether India would remain 'Indian' economically, politically and culturally. When the mighty America is struggling to remain 'American' with food at Burger King owned by a British company, groceries bought at German-owned Supermarket, car assembled at Canada, it would be idle to think that we would be able to preserve our identity and culture in face of greater economic invasion we are wilfully inviting. We should never forget that sensitive Americans have already begun saying: "Decades ago, made in America meant something. Today it is more deceptive than helpful", and a frenzy over American-made goods has erupted with some television ads proclaiming: "We are losing our shirts in this country. We are losing our dresses too."

In addition to the policy bonanza they had got earlier, the FERA companies can acquire any immovable property and flaunt their own brand names and trade marks wiping out all traces of Indianness not only from goods of basic and daily needs but also from our person and life-style. In theory, nothing prevents the FERA companies now from acquiring as much of Delhi as they like to promote our industrial and trade interests and even our TISCO, TELCO or for that matter our giant public enterprises, Bokaro, Rourkela, BHEL, etc. You have already invited them to taste the waters of Indian market. This they will certainly do keeping us at bay from their own.

It is an irony that in order to fight this looming catastrophe, the RSS has mounted a crusade with the slogans of *swadeshi* and *swavlamban*, once the battle-cry of the Congress when it spearheaded the national movement against the British. The RSS people are discarding foreign goods and taking a vow to use only Indian goods. Maybe they would even organise a bonfire of certain products as we did under Gandhiji's leadership. What a reversal of roles and that too during our lifetime! But this is not surprising when we find that Congressmen have as good as given up *khadi*, the symbol of *swadeshi* and *swavlamban* and their modernism spurns "prohibition" on which Mahatma Gandhi could stake everything.

I have no doubt that in a moment of cool reflection you will realise that the greatest damage has been caused to the national psyche and pride. A soft state and a soft-centred leadership have underrated the people's capacity to suffer and sacrifice for national survival with self-respect and opted for a soft course undermining the inner resources and strengths of the nation.

◆

TO be sure, to meet the crisis facing the nation today we require the adoption and operation of a war economy in which the nation accepts the strictest regime of austerity and distributes burdens and sacrifices equitably so that everyone appears in battle-dress against the common enemy—the unprecedented economic crisis. We require leaders in government and organisation to tell the people as Hugh Dalton did during the Second World War as Minister: "I have two coats and I am not going to have a third one during the War." Such a spirit and concrete personal example alone can set the right tone in society and usher in the climate for fruitful national endeavour to meet the challenges of today effectively.

But, sadly, there is only a lacklustre, lackadaisical, half-hearted and a near-formal approach to the crisis with all our heart and energies set on securing loans and their utilisation through what has come to be called 'liberalisation'. There is no exemplary austerity in the government and, therefore, no cut-down in conspicuous consumption in affluent sections of society. The government vehicles run as usual showing least concern for energy conservation, Parliament proceedings are being televised as if it meant no additional expenditure, a Congress observer for organisational elections charter a plane to be in time for his duty as if aviation fuel does not matter, etc. etc. On the other hand, fuel prices are unconscionably raised hurting the citizens and raising other prices. No one gives any thought to the alternative remedy, namely quantitative restriction (of petrol) through rationing without price hike, for the government officials are not affected and the industrialists and traders can absorb any price rise through expense account.

No less seriousness of purpose and efforts is required at the organisational (Congress) level, perhaps even more, since the sanctions for hard option have to be built among the people. The present changes hyped as reforms lack popular mandate and support, are soft for the elite and hard for the people and, therefore, demanded much more educative and constructive work among the masses if you insisted on your lonely plough to go to the end of the furrow. But the way in which they have been conducted, the organisational elections have shown that the lumpens have taken over professing loyalty to you. I think a decent person like you cannot but feel appalled, even horrified, at the way the newly constituted PCCs are falling upon one another to authorise you to nominate not only the office-bearers or the members of the AICC but, what is no less amusing, nominating yourself as the next Congress President. If all this was to be on the basis of manoeuvring and manipulation, one wonders why this gigantic force of elections was enacted. Can you, honestly, do justice to the responsibilities of both Prime Ministership and Congress Presidentship and can such concentration of functions in one individual lead to the effloresence of activities all over the country, as the situation decrees? The money power exhibited in these elections makes one fear that both the ruling party and the government may be shaped to suit the interests of those whom the new economic policy wants to make the principal agents of change—the international capitalism and the comprador. With multinationals coming in the money power is bound to grow too strong for honesty to survive in politics.

We can have no complaints against the IMF and World Bank, or for that matter even the MNCs, for they do not owe us a living. Their philosophy is well known and their world mission is clear.

They want to build and promote the interests of capitalism everywhere under the aegis of Western capitalism. They will not help us on our own terms and in accordance with our priorities however urgent and imperative. So their 'conditionalities' must supersede our national priorities. They never budge an inch from this approach unless the 'party' is possessed of an uncompromising spirit of self-respect and self-reliance and can muster courage to say: "Go to hell", like China. No wonder the IMF has come to be known as Imperial Monetary Force, their "imperialism" being consummated through never-ending addiction to the drug of debt and with the willing cooperation of the ruling elite which brought about the crisis by their profligacy and corruption.

However, their plighted stand for free enterprise is patently deceptive. Their advocacy for free market forces is also unsustainable. For under their benign dispensation only big enterprises in industry and trade are free and the market forces are the captive of monopolies and oligopolies. The small producers in small-scale and cottage industry sectors as well as in agriculture have to fight a losing battle for existence. With your policy of anarchic deregulation, decontrol, liberalisation and globalisation and, in particular, with the dismantling of the MRTP Act and other apparatus of policing the misdemeanours and predatory proclivities of big enterprise. There is little hope for their survival. In fact, starvation deaths in the handloom sector have already given a preview of what is going to happen in future.

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SO let there be no illusion about the direction you have chosen and the route you have taken. Henceforward, the instruments of advance will be capitalism, national and international, the strategy of advance would be accentuation of inequalities, economic and social, the process of advance would be 'trickle-down', however slow and meagre, the burden of advance will be borne by the poor and the disadvantaged and not the rich and the affluent, and the character of advance will be determined and directed by the IMF and World Bank, with all their paraphernalia of Budget control and monitoring located in Delhi. The kernel of the philosophy inspiring it is that the festival of the rich must be enabled to be larger and larger so that the crumbs falling from their table in the mouth of the poor become bigger and bigger.

We are the progenies of the Congress which was sworn to fight these trends. Even in its Congress-I incarnation it has not done away with the basic tenets of the old Constitution which proclaim crusade against them. Its election manifesto with stress on poverty alleviation, social justice, self-reliance and balanced regional development, bringing down prices and unemployment does not permit them. The country's Constitution with democratic socialism as its pole-star enshrined in its Preamble does not sanction them.

And yet to claim that we continue to adhere to the Congress policies which are based on the Gandhi-Nehru tradition is to show as much indifference to truth as Sahara shows to water. To us who had actively participated in the evolution of a certain ethos of our polity and economy and had lived and grown with it, it is fratricidal and subversive of everything that gives sustenance and strength to the nation—*swaraj, swadharma* (or ethos and genius), *swavlamban,* socialism.

The "de-ideologisation" which is being engineered will hand over the baton to casteism and communalism and other divisive forces. At one stroke the Planning Commission and the National Integration Council are rendered vacuous or irrelevant.

Mr Prime Minister, you have adopted a prescription without a diagnosis, selected physicians who do not know our Constitution, embarked on a road whose historic milestones have been abolished and leads to nowhere, fallen a prey to *elite populism* that blares the bugle for market forces, deregulation, decontrol, liberalisation and all the rest of it, ignored the lessons thrown up by the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries which first yielded to the elite populism and are now desperately seeking the Third Way approximating the Gandhi-Nehru values, misread the developments in the world and looked for the train in yesterday's time-table.

When the erstwhile communist countries with popular support for their political reforms and, what is more noteworthy, with their discipline and law-abiding nature (not yet fully destroyed) are now landed with the so-called 'reforms' in the worst possible economic crisis, the fate that awaits us is clear, if we are hellbent to pursue that course. We have had *glasnost* all the while with *perestroika* taking place in the dimension of freedom and peaceful means—and they did take place quite a lot though not for the benefit of the vested interests. The market forces were always largely free, and the intervention of the state was minimal.

Such controls and regulations as the state operated were dictated by social needs and peaceful growth, to which no sensible man could take any objection. In fact, it is such regulatory functions and interventions of the State which have made Korea, Taiwan, Singapore the show-pieces of development to which the government so avidly looks and the Finance Minister applauds as models. But this aspect is deliberately fudged and omitted impairing the government's approach and objectivity.

It is clear the long tradition of *glasnost* in the country has brought about a political constellation which cannot stomach these changes. The Left parties have raised the banner against them, the middle ones like the JD, SJP are girding up their loins, labour has already held massive demonstrations and even the BJP is reluctantly joining the fray with the RSS goading them. The deafening silence in the Congress-I is now steadily being broken.

Warning signals have already been hoisted. All the crucial indicators—growth, employment, export prices—are disturbing and might continue to be grave, on government's admission, for at least two-three years, a transitional period necessary for structural adjustment. All this is bound to fuel agitations that are building up.

The conditions in the Russian Federation have become so intolerable that responsible people are characterising the new reforms as "economic genocide" and have, in fact, called for retreat.

We cannot turn a blind eye to these ominous developments and out-Gorbachev Gorbachev himself in damaging both polity and economy. Please pause and think. Don't allow the situation to go out of hand. Pull back from the brink. Redress the balance. Restore the consensus.

And to this end, the following steps may be taken urgently:

(i) A convention of Congressmen like the Ooty seminar lasting for a week may be held to hammer out an alternative. This alternative programme should be discussed at all levels of the Congress to evolve a consensus inside the Congress in the first instance, and make every Congressman part of the national purpose and effort. Thus equipped, the organisation can prepare the country for hard work and sacrifice.

(ii) The Congress blueprint should be intensively discussed with all political parties, social and constructive organisations, economists and other academics of eminence, to evolve a national consensus through this national debate.

(iii) Finally, it should be discussed and adopted by Parliament. This is the way to get on with the job. There is no other way. नान्यः पन्थाः अयनाय ।

I would have suggested the basics of an alternative approach, as my long association with planning always keeps me in an illusion that I can do so. But that would not have much meaning and worth for the essential thing is national consensus on the issue, and a monologue cannot be a substitute for it. And there is also the disheartening fact that though alternative suggestions have been offered by eminent economists and planners—certainly more capable than me—they have been contemptuously brushed aside.

I hope you will excuse my giving vent to feelings in this forthright manner, perhaps justified by the situation which can't be permitted to be graver.

रखियो गालिब मुझे इस तल्खनवाई में मुआफ,
आज मेरे दिल में कुछ दर्द सिवा होता है ।

With regards,

Yours sincerely,

Shyam Nandan Mishra

Spectre of Destabilisation

ARUN KUMAR

The Union Budget for 1992-93 has been hailed for many firsts. Two of these are critical to India's economic health. First, the scheme relating to the import of gold into India by returning Indians; and second, the partial convertibility of the rupee. These are steps which will lead to a closer integration of the Indian economy into the world economy. Even if this is considered desirable from certain standpoints, if the economy gets destabilised, the country would be grievously hurt. To understand this, it is best to understand the government's best scenario case.

The gold scheme is supposed to check the smuggling of gold into India which, according to estimates, has been of the order of 250 tonnes per annum and costs the nation roughly $3 billion per annum in terms of lost foreign exchange. It is expected that the price of gold in India will come down as the suppply of gold through legal channels increases. This, it is argued would make smuggling of gold less lucrative and reduce the loss of foreign exchange.

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THE partial convertibility of the rupee is supposed to achieve several goals. For exporters and others bringing in foreign exchange into India, a premium would accrue on 60 per cent of the foreign exchange they bring in and sell in the free market. This would be an incentive to exports and to bringing back foreign exchange proceeds from abroad. The attractiveness of diverting these proceeds of the *havala* market would be lowered.

The scheme forces the importers to buy their requirements from the free market. The disequilibrium in the foreign exchange market would reflect in the premium on foreign exchange in the free market. The demand for foreign exchange would fall. In other words, there would be a corrective mechanism to limit imports to the availability of foreign exchange.

Concessions have been offered to investments by foreign mutual funds and pension funds. It is hoped that the MNCs will invest in India and thereby increase foreign exchange availability. Some Indian companies are also expected to raise equity abroad and bring in foreign exchange. Thus, foreign exchange availability for imports and travel abroad would be determined by exports and inflows on capital account and invisibles.

It is hoped by the policy-makers that these steps will stabilise the foreign exchange markets and the rupee-dollar parity would settle to some reasonable level. This would be unlike the present when the *havala* market constantly destabilises the foreign exchange market. It is also hoped that illegal transactions in foreign exchange would end and the country would have enough foreign exchange. How realistic is this?

The first and foremost thing to note is that India is short of foreign exchange if the economy is allowed to do as it pleases. Till now there were two markets, a legal and an illegal one. Availability of foreign exchange was in deficit in both and that is why the rupee continuously depreciated in the last three years. In the illegal market, the demand from smugglers and those wishing to keep capital abroad was larger than the supply from drug traffickers, those who were cornering remittances and those indulging in under- and over-invoicing of exports and imports. The *havala* market rate kept rising.

In the legal market, the supply was always short of the demand. So, demand spilled over to the illegal market. The premium in the illegal market led to a diversion of funds from the legal market to the illegal market. This reduced supply in the legal market below what it could have been and forced the government to depreciate the rupee.

While supply may go up, demand for foreign exchange would shoot up. It has been observed in India and many Third World countries that more the channels for circulating black incomes, more is the black income generation. Black incomes have a link with holding of gold and with flight of capital from India.

With the permission to bring in gold, the distinction between legal and illegal gold would be impossible. A lot more of black money can be held in the form of gold and more conveniently. This would also be inflation-proof as compared to holding it in the form of rupee. Some of the savings in white may also be held in the form of gold. The demand for gold would then rise.

It is clear that even at the prevailing premium, the demand for gold was high. It is not that gold was purchased because of supply of gold through smuggling. It was the other way round. Gold was smuggled in

The author is a Reader at the Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

since there was demand which fetched sufficient premium over the international price. So, while supply will rise, demand for gold would rise even more. It is also likely that the price of gold in India would get linked to the rupee-dollar parity and would rise and fall with it. Would this make smuggling of gold unprofitable?

At the lower price of gold, smuggling would remain profitable. The risk of smuggling would decline. Smuggling would partly be legalised. Given the leaky nature of Indian Customs, only a fraction of the gold brought in would be declared. When even banned items enter India, permitted goods would be able to enter easily without paying duty. It is known that when banned electronics goods are brought in and caught, only the packaging or the cartons are destroyed while the goods enter the country.

The gold price difference between India and international markets would equal the duty plus some profit for the traveller. If this profit is small, then the traveller would not bring in gold. He would bring dollars and sell them in the free market. A 25 per cent margin is likely to obtain between the international and Indian price of gold. This would be sufficient for the smuggler whose risk would now be negligible. In effect, the smuggling in of gold and *havala* market would continue.

In any case, the legal flow of gold through returning Indians would be a fraction of the increased demand for gold. Smugglers would provide the rest and this would be larger than at present since the price would be lower and demand would have risen.

Flight of capital in the new framework of flexibility would be easier. Capital is held abroad for a variety of reasons. The Indian economy is not out of the woods and it is safer to hold capital outside. A change in government could see the rules change and the end of convertibility. People were taking out capital not because the rate of profit outside was higher but it allowed them a flexibility of operation and provided status.

If devaluation of the rupee is taken into account, then the rate of return on capital held abroad in rupee terms was perhaps greater. This factor is likely to remain valid when one compares India's rate of inflation with that in the advanced countries. With inflation rate likely to accelerate, devaluation will continue apace. Thus, unless the interest rates in the Indian economy are kept high, flight of capital would not only continue but could increase.

It is quite likely that gold in the free market would command a higher premium than foreign exchange in the free market. People may then prefer to bring in gold rather than foreign exchange. Gold entering the economy is not foreign exchange available to the government. If this was not so, India would have no shortage of foreign exchange since individuals in India hold an estimated $60 billion of gold in the country. Any inflow of equity capital by the MNCs and Indian companies would be more than matched by outflow on account of purchase of machines, consultancy, raw materials and intermediates.

With income distribution worsening and speculation and slow-down in production, flight of capital would increase. Foreign pleasure trips and purchase of real estate abroad, etc. would increase. The outflow of foreign exchange in a liberalised atmosphere has been known to increase in other countries too. As a consequence, the inflow of foreign exchange in the economy is likely to be reduced rather than increased.

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AS stagflation deepens, it is speculative activity rather than productive activity which will become more profitable. Partial convertibility to stem the outflow of capital will force India to keep interest rates high (as argued above) and this will deepen stagflation. The attractiveness of speculation in real estate, secondary share market and foreign exchange markets (worldwide it is known to be speculative) would rise. Gold and foreign exchange entering the economy would also add to liquidity for speculation.

Import intensity of the economy would rise in a liberal regime. Goods would be bought from outside which command a premium in the Indian economy. More essential goods would not be brought in unless their prices rise. In effect, inflation would be fuelled by shortages. Pressure on government to release its reserves would then rise. However, in a deteriorating situation, the government would be loath to intervene, as in the past.

In effect, an overall shortage of foreign exchange will fuel a depreciation of the rupee. This would lead to an increase both in the price of gold in India and demand for gold and create further shortage of foreign exchange. Flight of capital would continue. Black income generation would rise and fuel demand for gold and foreign exchange. Import intensity would rise causing demand for foreign exchange to rise leading to further pressure for devaluation. Devaluation would force prices to rise and lead to further devaluation. With liberalisation, even a lower fiscal deficit will lead to a higher leakage of demand from the national economy and cause the BoP deficit to worsen. Several wheels within wheels would set up vicious circles of destabilisation of the currency and the Indian economy.

If the country a) had sufficient reserves to intervene and reverse expectations and b) could curb the black economy and the demand for foreign exchange and gold, then the steps taken could have yielded stability. In the present circumstances, this seems unlikely. There is no escape from destabilisation as long as more and more concessions are given to the rich, as in the Union Budget 1992-93, whose links are increasingly outside the Indian economy. ■

(Courtesy. *The Hindustan Times*)

Role of Interest Groups

KISHOR C. SAMAL

Though maximisation of net benefits from fiscal operation is the objective of the voters in general, the role of fiscal interest groups is vital in the democratic process. Fiscal interest groups are powerful factors in the making of a Budget. In India, various taxpayer groups organise to represent their interests and put great pressure on the Union Finance Minister to modify fiscal instruments to suit their interests. A fiscal system should take account of the strategic role of multiple interest groups and the fiscal decision based on the concerns of these interest groups may be realistic.[1]

In India, besides backdoor pressures of some interest groups and groups of individuals, economists, trade unions, farmers' representatives and industrialists are openly invited by the Union Finance Minister before the presentation of the Central Budget to discuss their interests, objectives and suggestions. But representatives of some organised groups such as the students, teachers, scientists and government employees are usually not invited. Moreover, this year though the economists were invited, no economist with Left leanings was included in the list.

In this paper we will discuss how far the suggestions particularly relating to taxation made by the economists, industrialists, farmers' representatives and trade unions during the pre-Budget consultations with the Union Finance Minister are incorporated in the 1992 Central Budget.

Tax Structure

Both the economists and trade unions demanded that the share of direct tax in the total tax revenue be increased. Further, the economists suggested that this can be achieved by doing away with various exemptions. Accordingly, several routes for seeking tax exemptions under Sections 80L, 80CCA for any investment in Jeevan Dhara and Jeevan Akshay Annuity Plans of the LIC and 80CCB for investment in equity-linked saving schemes have been closed in the 1992-93 Central Budget. Moreover, the trade unions wanted exemption of income tax upto the annual income of Rs 50,000. But, though it is proposed to restructure the personal income tax with lower rates of taxation with a narrower spread between the entry rate and the maximum marginal rate and a minimum of tax incentives, the exemption limit of personal income tax is enhanced from Rs 22,000 to only Rs 28,000. Three tax rates slabs are being introduced with 20 per cent applicable upto Rs 50,000, 30 per cent on incomes upto Rs 1 lakh and a maximum rate of 40 per cent on incomes above Rs 1 lakh. This is on the basis of the Chelliah Committee Report.

The author is a Reader, Post-Graduate Department of Economics, G.M. College, Sambalpur (Orissa).

In contrast to the economists and trade unions' suggestions, the industrialists asked for more concessions and exemptions. They wanted abolition of wealth and capital gain tax and restorationof investment allowance and accelerated depreciation.

In case of corporation tax, there is no change in tax and surcharge. There is no restoration of investment allowance and accelerated depreciation in the 1992-93 Central Budget as demanded by the industrialists. However, there is a provision to carry forward the depreciation allowance. It is proposed that in respect of the assessment year 1992-93, the quantum set for carried forward depreciation and investment allowance in case of companies where such amount exceeds Rs 1 lakh shall be limited to two-thirds of such amount and the remaining one-third will be allowed to be adjusted in the assessment year 1993-94. Artificial ceiling in regard to certain business expenses are also liberalised.

Though as desired by the industrialists, the wealth and capital gain taxes are not abolished, some benefits are given in this sphere on the basis of the recommendations of the Chelliah Committee. Taxable capital gains will be computed by allowing the cost of assets to be adjusted for general inflation before deducting from the sale proceeds. This is a regressive step since it favours unearned income, whereas no indexation is allowed in case of earned income, particularly salary income. Further, the wealth tax will distinguish between non-productive and productive assets and investments in productive assets such as shares, securities, bonds, bank deposits, mutual funds will be exempted from the wealth tax. Of-course, this is on the basis of the Chelliah Committee Report as well as due to the pressure of the business lobby.

It is to be pointed out that though a variety of tax incentives are used to implement social and industrial policy objectives in the developing countries, there are inconsistencies of these tax incentives with the stated policy objectives of the governments.[2] Investment incentives through the tax system include tax holidays, investment tax credit, tax rebates, lower tax rates, investment allowance and accelerated depreciation allowance. An important role is played by properly designed investment incentives in stimulating investment. However, administrative discretion often discourages potential investors. Further, restoration of investment allowance and accelerated depreciation allowance in India, as demanded by the industrialists, will encourage capital-intensive technology creating further unemployment. Hence the Finance Minister has taken a correct step of not restoring these allowances in the 1992-93 Central Budget.

Rationalisation

The economists and trade unions suggested simplification of tax laws. Moreover, the economists were in favour of rationalisation of tariff rates, plugging loopholes in the tax system and gearing up tax administration to boost revenue collection. Similarly, the industralists wanted to ensure better compliance from the tax-payers rather than raising the tax rates.

In fact the success of the tax policy changes depends mostly on the administrative capability in collection of revenue through fair and efficient enforcement. Of course, the political will is most essential. In recent times, all efforts to reform the tax system in the developing countries emphasise simplification of the tax structure and administration.[3] In line with this, the Union Finance Minister said in his Budget speech: "A moderately progressive tax structure combined with strong enforcement is the best way of encouraging honesty and voluntary tax compliance."

To rationalise the tax structure the Finance Minister has taken various steps in the 1992-93 Central Budget such as (i) treating the partnership firms as a separate tax entity and doing away with the taxation of the same income in the hands of partners; (ii) planning to set up the national court of direct tax, settlement commission for dealing with custom and excise disputes and an appellate tribunal; (iii) abolition of licensing control on production and manufacturing under the Central Excise and Salt Act 1944; (iv) reduction in the number of duty slabs to four in case of the auxiliary duty structure of the customs; (v) reduction of multiplicity of rates of excise on cotton yarn and cellulosic spun yarn; and (vi) switching over from specific rate to ad-valorem mode of levy wherever feasible, beginning with the major non-ferrous metals.

Tax Evasion

One common feature of the developing countries including India is tax evasion. Given the degree of tax evasion in these countries, it is inappropriate to assume that income taxes are fully borne by the income tax-payer. Tax evasion usually involves bribery of officials. Under a hierarchical bureaucratic system, senior officials with higher income and wealth receive a large portion of the bribes, alongwith professionals acting as middlemen. Thus, there is a redistribution of income from middle-class businessmen and others to high-income group elites. This is diametrically opposed to the conventional incidence theory.[4]

Though the economists and trade unions did not discuss the theoretical aspect of tax evasion with the Union Finance Minister, they simply wanted deterrent action against tax evasion. But the industrialists and farmers' representatives did not raise these questions. On the other hand, the trade unions demanded strong steps to curb the growth of black money in the economy and criticised the amnesty schemes to woo the black money holders. The trade unions are justified in their criticism of the amnesty schemes for black money, particularly the Voluntary Disclosure Scheme. The Direct Tax Enquiry Committee criticised these schemes since the VDS favours only the fraudulent and dishonest persons at the cost of honest and law-abiding tax-payers. The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) in its latest report on the VDS has also mentioned these habitual offenders and tax dodgers laundering large amounts of black money at a nominal cost to themselves.

But in the 1992-93 Central Budget, no concrete step is taken to check tax-evasion and generation of black money. Of course, the income of minor children (except incomes of child artistes and wage incomes of minors) is proposed to be clubbed with that of the parent to plug loopholes which account for substantial leakages of revenue. On the other hand, every passenger will be allowed to bring upto five kilograms of gold and the import duty on such gold will be Rs 450 per 10 grams. This step may help to check smuggling gold into the country. But this is a step to help indirectly the black money holder in foreign exchange to bring this into India in the form of gold through their connections. The Gold Bond Scheme will also help the black money holder.

Presumptive Tax

There is also an innovative measure to levy a presumptive tax of Rs 1400 per year on shopkeepers and other retail traders with an annual turnover of below Rs 5 lakhs to enable them to avoid the difficulty of maintaining the detailed account book, filing a complicated tax return and going through the normal assessment procedure.

However, the economists suggested a steep tax on self-employed professionals like chartered accountants, doctors, management consultants, architects and so on. On the other hand, the industrialists wanted a flat tax on traders, shopkeepers and self-employed professionals. Though the industrialists' suggestions in this respect are partially fulfilled, no step is taken to apply presumptive tax on self-employed professionals. Even the presumptive tax in case of traders and shopkeepers is not properly implemented. There should have been a distinction between different categories of traders and shopkeepers to apply presumptive tax. Under the presumptive tax system the tax administration should look at individuals through certain easily observed criteria, such as, (i) ownership of flat/house recently constructed, (ii) ownership of a motor vehicle for personal use, (iii) a residential telephone connection, and (iv) annual electricity consumption in excess of certain amount. But the 1992-93 Central Budget has taken 'turnover' as a criteria for imposing presumptive tax. 'Turnover' of a traders/shopkeeper is not easily observable and is subject to manipulation. To make a fair assessment, it would have been better to classify traders/shopkeepers into, say, three categories: (a) trader/shopkeepers only with residential buildings; (b) traders/shopkeepers with recently constructed buildings, residential phone connections and electricity consumption beyond Rs 250 per month; and (c) traders as in (b) but with a motor vehicles for personal use. Thus if the first category of traders would be asked to pay Rs 1400 per year, the second category should be asked to pay a higher rate and the third category a still higher rate of presumptive tax. The same principle should have been applicable to self-employed professionals.

Agriculture / Rural Sector

Almost all the representatives—economists, farmers, trade unions and industrialists—wanted to widen the tax base by taxing agricultural income. By bringing agricultural income into the tax fold, the government could have escaped the criticism that it favours the rich and puts a heavy burden on the poor in the process of carrying out the economic reforms. Moreover, broadening the tax base of the existing income taxes by including agricultural income would increase revenue and improve the simplicity and neutrality and equity of the tax system. But there are institutional and political difficulties associated with bringing agricultural income into the tax net.

An alternative to agricultural income is land tax which was also discussed at the World Bank Conference on Tax Policy in Washington in March 1990. But the design of land tax is not flexible enough to deal with instability in agricultural incomes. Progressive tax rates on land holdings are very difficult to administer. Land taxes in the developing countries have not been effective in attaining non-revenue goals like transferring resources from agriculture to non-agricultural sectors, discouraging speculative land use and assisting in land reforms.[5] In India, land tax is a redundant tool in tax policy.

So, income tax on agricultural income is the only solution to mop up the surplus generated in the properous agricultural areas. There is a case for presumptive income tax on agricultural income on an objective measure of farm productivity. Land area, soil quality, irrigation facilities and use of agricultural inputs are the best indicators of farm productivity. But it is politically difficult to tax the rural rich who are the vote-banks in the rural areas. And the Union Finance Minister is very much aware of this political difficulty. So, in the 1992-93 Central Budget there is no provision for agricultural income tax on the ground that it is a State subject. Nor is there any proposal for an alternative to the agricultural income tax.

Thus while favouring the rich farmers, there is a heavy burden on the poor in the rural areas. Budgetary allocation for rural development and the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana has gone down. Since prices of foods and cereals have risen very rapidly, the rural poor will suffer more. Moreover, the budgetary deficit of more than Rs 5000 crores, additional excise and Rs 3200 crores reducation of subsidies and the railway freight hike will further push up the prices. For political stability and the success of economic reforms, instead of reducing the anti-poverty programmes, the government should expand these programmes which certain modifications to check leakages.

Export and Import Duties

Only the industrialists wanted lowering of the project import duties. While they favoured liberalisation of technology imports, the farmers' representatives wanted removal of obstacles in the way of agricultural exports.

The farmers' demand for removal of the aforementioned obstacles has not been taken into consideration whereas the demand by the industrialists has been taken care of, though the system of exim scripts is abolished.

By lowering the ad-valorem rates of basic plus auxiliary duties of import duties (including of specific duties), customs duty is reduced from a maximum of 110 per cent. The general duty on capital goods including project imports and machinery is reduced from 80 per cent to 60 per cent. In case of capital goods for projects, import duty on electronics is reduced from 60 to 50 per cent, on coal mining and crude petroleum refining to a lower uniform rate of 30 per cent on other capital goods by 10 per cent.

Reducing tariff[6] is expected to reduce revenue. The proposed restructuring of customs duty together with other changes in customs duty in the 1992-93 Central Budget results in a net loss of Rs 2023.35 crores. Various kinds of fiscal adjustments would be required to offset the revenue consequences of tariff reductions in India where import duties represent around three-fifths of the value of imports.

The adjustment is made to both excise tax as well as countervailing customs duty to make the tax system more trade neutral. But the Finance Minister in the 1992-93 Central Budget has raised additional resources from excise only to the tune of Rs 2210.90 crores to offset the revenue loss from restructuring of customs tariff.

Other Sectional Interests

The Finance Minister has also succumbed to the pressure of some vocal sections. Thus, in the 1992-93 Central Budget, we find: (i) withdrawal of the provisions relating to tax deducations as source in respect of interest on term deposits with banks and commission payments under the pressure of the commercial banks and various members of Parliament; (ii) withdrawal of the expenditure tax on airconditioned restaurants due to several representations of middle-class people and small establishment restaurants in cities and towns; (iii) provision of "one rank one pension" for defence pensioners due to the movement of ex-servicemen backed by all the major political parties as well as to please the people of Punjab; and (iv) exemption of income tax on compensation received by the victims of the Bhopal gas disaster due to the lobby of various voluntary organisations.

The Finance Minister has also shown some sympathy to women by increasing standard deductions from Rs 12,000 to 15,000 in the case of working women having a total annual income upto Rs 75,000 and favours to the old, handicapped dependants, authors, playwrights, artists, musicians, actors and sportsmen by giving various concessions in the sphere of personal income tax.

IMF / World Bank Pressures

It is true that for the various minor and major changes in fiscal structure the Finance Minister is heevily influenced by the suggestions of industrial captains disregarding the advice, given by the trade unions and farmers' representatives. Most of the changes effected in the 1992-93 Central Budget are in tune with the Chelliah Committee Report and suggestions made by the industrialists. However, most of the suggestions of the Chelliah Committee favouring corporate and industrial sectors are incorporated in the 1992-93 Central Budget.

Moreover, the major and radical changes made in the Budget are due to the pressures of multinational and transnationals through their watchdogs, the IMF and the World Bank. The major conditionalities of the IMF and the World Bank for their loan to India are: privatisation, liberalisation and opening up of the economy to capitalist countries and proper pricing and interest rate policy.

Hence under the pressure of the two multilateral organisations, the 1992-93 Central Budget has opened up the Indian economy by (i) partial convertibility of the Indian rupee by which 40 per cent of foreign exchange remitted will be converted at the official exchange rate and the remaining 60 per cent at a market determined rate; (ii) delicencing of all imports; (iii) major simplification of trade policy; (iv) easier importation of gold; (v) restruc-

(Continued on page 22)

Emergence of Central Asia and Its Relevance to India

RASHEEDUDDIN KHAN

Central Asia has suddenly emerged to a new life of sovereign identity and geopolitical importance, in the wake of the cataclysmic changes in the now defunct Soviet Union. Its new relevance in international politics is engaging the eager attention of policy-makers and analysts in the context of the changing equations of power.

Let us first recapitulate the geo-historic setting of Central Asia as a distinct civilisational belt. Since ancient times, it has had strong socio-cultural ties, on the one hand with Turkey in the west and with Hindustan subcontinent in the south. The archaeological excavations at Sugdian in Tajikistan reveal many aspects of similarity with Harappa. The Buddhist links during the times of the Kushana and Kanishka exhibit strong socio-cultural affinity with South Asia. The migrations of tribes to India has mainly been from and through the trans-Oxus region (the Amu-darya basin) and the Khwarizm area—right from the early epochs of the pagan Aryan, Yue-chi, Saka tribes to the medieval period of which witnessed the Turanian *qaflas* (groups) of Muslim Uzbek, Turkoman, Tajik, Mughal and Pathan tribes, moving to the fertile plains of India. The famous Silk Route across the Pamirs and the fabled 'golden road' to Samarkand still conjures memories of primordial commercial transactions, romance and adventure between Asian regions. The bazars, the hawkers, the *chai-khanas* (teashops), the smell and tastes of *samosa*, the *kababs*, the *nan* and the *pulav*, the songs, music, and dance, and the style of living, etiquettes, pattern of inter-personal compassion, and outlook on life—all these bind them with us in special ties of fraternity and commonality. Central Asia is a different region, but not a strange region to us in South Asia, because so much of it is familiar and predictable, due to long and close historic relations.

The author, a distinguished academic and former member of the Rajya Sabha, is the Director, Indian Institute of Federal Studies, New Delhi. He was a member of a non-governmental delegation sent by the Government of India to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan (January 25-February 2, 1992) to explore the prospects of interaction of the independent Central Asian states with India. Headed by the former Union Minister, Ram Niwas Mirdha, the delegation included the erstwhile Foreign Secretary, S.K. Singh, Congress-I leader and noted journalist, M.J. Akbar, and Professors Devendra Kaushik and Javed Ashraf of the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

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PUTTING Central Asia in the larger Asian scenario, we must remember that no continent of the world, is as big in its territory and population and as diverse and distinct in the culture, civilisation, ethnic composition and social patterns of its sub-regions, as Asia is. It is not often realised that all the religions of the world originated in Asia, and that it has also been the cradle of most of the ancient civilisations of mankind as well. Asia is indeed a mega-continent with at least five identified subcontinents—East Asia, South-East Asia, South Asia, West Asia and Central Asia. Each subcontinent had made great contribution in the development of human civilisation, in the ancient and medieval times, until they were overrun by different Western colonial-imperial powers in the late eighteenth, the nineteenth and the mid-twentieth centuries.

The British, Dutch and Americans dominated the East, the French and the Dutch colonised South-East Asia, the British established their sprawling empire in South Asia (with few French and Portuguese pockets), the Ottoman Turkish Empire dominated West Asia for centuries and then was succeeded by the British and French spheres of influence after the First World War.

Since the end of its medieval glory, Central Asia with its major Khanates of Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva came under the expanding overlordship of Czarist Russia. As Lenin had put it, the Czarist Empire was a 'prison house of nationalities', numbering more than a hundred. After the October Revolution, 1917, while their colonial status was formally sought to be removed, but in practice, again to use

Lenin's own phrase, the 'big power chauvinism of Russia', overshadowed the autonomy and national pride of the region, through compulsions for ideological conformism, political centralisation and imposed command-and-control integration of economy, production processes and raw material utilisation, etc. This situation, however, had suddenly and dramatically changed in 1991, with the rather unexpected dismantling of the Soviet Union, due to quick procession of events—the failure of Gorbachev's regime to work out a new Union Treaty for the continuation of the Soviet Union on new terms; the August 1991 coup and its negative consequence on the Soviet multi-nationality federation; and the blatant assertion of separate Russian identity by Yeltsin, etc.

While the subjugated countries in other four parts of Asia acquired political independence, as a consequence of the decolonisation process, set in motion by the end of Second World War on the collapse of the Western colonial system, Central Asia remained an integral part of the reinvigorated Soviet Union, which had in the same phase emerged as one of the two superpowers, due to its nuclear capability.

Four formations emerged as a consequence of this dismemberment—namely, the three breakaway Baltic republics of Lativa, Lithuania and Estonia, the Caucasian republics of Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Moldavia, which are witnessing anarchic conflicts and confusion in the entire region west of the Caspian; the three Slav republics of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus which have entered into an ad-hoc pattern of cooperation and the five Central Asian, Muslim dominated republics of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenia, Tajikistan and Kirghizia.

The new collective name of Commonwealth of Independent States given to the former Soviet Union is organisationally and substantially quite ambiguous and unclear. It is neither a union, nor a federation, nor a confederation, nor even a clear economic and security formation. It has no legal status, no formal and defined structure of coordination. It is at best an *ad hoc* transient arrangement susceptible to a variety of interpretations about its role and character. In the UN and its agencies, the Russian federation is being recognised as the successor state to the Soviet Union. In the diplomatic area of issuing of visas etc. for all the republics of the former Soviet Union, the successor Embassy and Consular missions of Russia are acting as a clearing facility. The rouble still continues as the common currency; and Aeroflot and the Railways as the common means of transport. Even the defence structure has also not been entirely dismembered, notwithstanding some formation of militia in the new sovereign republics and some agreement on the nuclear weapons system.

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THE new leaderships in the Central Asian republics, obviously appear bewildered and overwhelmed by sudden realisation of their heavy responsibilities for nation-building. They are groping for light and searching for avenues of expeditious and comprehensive economic growth. They need considerable moral, political, diplomatic and above all tangible economic support and cooperation from many countries, if the present chaos and breakdown in economy and dislocation of their policy is to be rectified, and stability and legitimacy restored.

There is a great vacuum to fill in Central Asia due to the sudden collapse not only of the highly integrated and interdependent Soviet socialist economy and centrally directed market system, but also due to the disbandment of their larger regional organisation, the COMECON. In the wake of this situation several countries, singly and jointly are jockeying for position of pre-eminence to help them build what is called a 'market-friendly' economy. Taking advantage of the manifest ambiguity and contradictions in the economic programme and perspective of the new leaderships in these sovereign republics, powerful global economic interests, represented by governmental agencies not only of the advanced metropolitan countries like the US, France, Britain, Germany and Japan, but also of the new economic dragons of Asia—the Republic of Korea, Singapore—and China, even Israel, together with several TNCs are probing the prospects of obtaining specific projects, investment areas and possible trade concessions. Close on the heels are the efforts of neighbouring Muslim regional powers—Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states—to win favours. The close ethnic affinity of Turkey, and religious affiliation of all of them, is a primordial factor in their favour in seeking economic cooperation.

This is a period of perilous transition for Central Asia. The new states are seeking, in broad strokes, radical change from the highly centralised and stultified state-dominated economic structures, known earlier as the socialist strategy of development, to a sort of mixed economy (though not of the

Indian model) but one in which the achievements of social welfare—mass education, full employment, health-care, housing, cheap public transport system, etc.—could be preserved and reconciled with private initiative and enterprise that is expected to release the productive energies of the people. But even for this 'dream', there is no pragmatic blueprint. It is still in the realm of vague slogans and pious wishes. They are painfully aware of the 'evils' of socialism (or shall we call it the Stalinist model of distorted socialism), but they are blissfully unaware, and indeed ignorant, about the necessary infrastructure and prerequistes, pitfalls, complexities above all the exploitative edge of even the revised and modified modern capitalism. We do hope that from socialist illusion to capitalist illusion, would not be the course of their tragic destiny of disappointment.

It is in this context that India's future course of relations with the Central Asian republics will have to be examined and recast in a systematic manner with projections of probable alternative scenarios. They are revising their domestic policies and perspective, as well as their approaches to international politics, trade, commerce, diplomacy, cultural values, security and defence-related issues. It is necessary, indeed imperative, for us in India to relate and re-evaluate these changes in terms of our own national and regional interests, keeping in mind the larger goal of peace, stability and security covering South, Central and West Asia and the need for strengthening the process of secular-democratic nation-building.

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DURING our visit to Tashkent, Samarkand and Alma Ata (January-February 1992) as part of an unofficial goodwill delegation sponsored by the Government of India to Central Asia, to convey the good wishes of our people and administration and assurance of our deep interest in promoting mutually beneficial relations in several fields of collective life, we realised how significant and pre-eminent is India's position and possible role in their scale of priority.

The five Central Asian republics with which India has already decided to establish full-fledged diplomatic ties are: *Uzbekistan* (Pop.: 21 million), *Kazakhstan* (17 million), *Tajikistan* (16 million), *Kirghizia* (5 million), *Turkmenia* (4 million). This is symbolic of our deep concern for their sovereign existence and for their desire to give a socio-economic content to stabilise the foundation of their new identity. For paucity of time, our delegation could only visit the two larger republics of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan in its ten days sojourn and meet top political and cultural leaders—Prime Ministers, Deputy Prime Ministers, Foreign Ministers, Ministers of Construction, Culture and Education, Information, Heads and Professors of the Academy of Sciences and Universities, members of the Presidiums of Friendship Societies, few media persons and religious leaders. It was obvious throughout our discussions at all levels that India enjoys a place of pre-eminence in their consciousness not only because of long historic ties and common heritage, but especially due to two other contemporary factors, namely, our close friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union (of which Central Asia was a part) for the last four decades, and during that period, our special concern for the Asian republics as indicated in the fact that Jawaharlal Nehru had invited them as participants in the Asian Relations Conference in March-April 1947, New Delhi, and then so clearly articulated in his speeches during his very first visit to the Soviet Union and Central Asia in June 1955. Secondly, our secular democratic structure of governance recognising the equal rights of our multi-ethnic and multi-religious population coincides with their own perspective of nation-building—a fact significantly underlined by the Deputy Prime Minister of Kazakhstan, Dzoldasbekov, when we met him.

The Prime Minister of Uzbekistan, Abul Kasim Mutalov, set the tone of our discussions when he said with considerable conviction that they are 'very proud of friendly India', and its role in 'regional and world politics' and that they look forward to cooperation with India in many sectors of their development plans. That was the reason that the very first visit of the Uzbek President, Islam Karimov, was to India in the middle of August 1991. He said: "I will start my foreign visit by going to the big Asian country—India." Similarly, the Kazakh President, Nursultan Nazarbayev's first official visit was to India, in the third week of February, when he signed five agreements outlining the general scope of our bilateral cooperation.

The possible agenda of cooperation was spelt out by the Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan, Ubaidullah Abdurazzakov, when he said: "We need considerable help of India in many spheres—economic, political, scientific, technological, cultural, etc., especially in areas of managerial services, investments and banking sectors, market economy problems, service sector and telecommunications."

Equally keen are the educationists in working out agreements for promoting cooperation in higher education and certain areas of joint research. The Rector and Professors of Tashkent University and members of the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences—where a beautiful painting of Al-Biruni now adorns the Committee room—and the Minister of High and Secondary Education of Uzbekistan, Dr Shaukat Alimov, mentioned that in some fields of knowledge they have practically no expertise, and it is in these areas that they would seek effective cooperation with India. Already they have established close contacts with Indian scientists in applied and fundamental research, especially in physics, electronics, solar energy research, etc. Now they would like to extend cooperation in management studies, industrial studies, computer sciences, international law and organisation, social sciences like economics and political science. They are on the verge of recasting their educational system, and would like India to advise them especially from its own experience of running Institutes of Technology and Institutes of Management, as well as the entire gamut of social science studies.

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SIMILARLY, the Al-Farabi University in Alma Ata, named after the famous medieval scientist, philosopher and encyclopaedist, and established in 1936, proposes to introduce degrees on the pattern of BA and MA in India, and is planning to revise the content and perspectives of their textbooks, especially in social sciences and history. They consider India's experience of much relevance to them, as it has had, as they put it, the advantage of having synthesised Western knowledge to the specific requirement of transforming an Oriental civilisation to modernity. The Al-Farabi University would like to explore prospects of joint research collaboration with India. They have joint research project in cosmic radiation with the US, and in other fields of sciences, with Germany, France, Scandinavian countries and China.

The Kazakh Information Centre is a collective of journalists who are eager to establish fruitful contacts with media persons in India. Their news agency, *Kaytag*—a counterpart of the Russian *Tass* agency—is interested in establishing direct contacts with the Indian news agencies—PTI and UNI.

The Kazakh Friendship Society, housed in one of the most modern buildings in Alma Ata with elaborate facilities for conferences, meetings and cultural performances, etc. runs an India Club, called *Shanti*. The members of this club, under its charming and energetic secretary, Madam Zaitoon Masuma, have trained amateur artists in Indian dances, music and arts. They would like some dance *guru* to visit them, and teach dance techniques to the eager youngsters. They plan to establish a cinema hall for the exhibition of Indian films and video cassettes, which are tremendously popular and also to set up a library on Indian literature, culture and civilisation. The President of the Friendship Society, Madam Zeenat Ameerkhanov, underlined the fact that "our people have deep feelings and respect for Indian culture, and have great fondness for your films and music".

Almost identical sentiments were expressed in our pleasant and frank meeting in the Uzbekistan Union of Writers in Tashkent, which has been in existence for over 60 years, and with its over 700 members played seminal role in the intellectual life of the people. Their President, Jamal Kamal, spoke of the inspirational role of India's classical and modern literature, and its impact on Uzbek literary traditions.

A measure of their fondness for India can be seen in the fact that an authentic translation of *Ramayan* in the Uzbek language was done a long time ago, and the complete collected works of Rabindranath Tagore are already translated. Most of the writings of Jawaharlal Nehru—much admired and loved as a leader and politician of resurgent Asia—are already available and some more are being currently translated. Their eminent old poet, Shukrallah, told us that the poetry of Mirza Bedil, Ghalib and Iqbal is widely known in Uzbekistan. Reverting to the theme of commonality of humanism, ethics, goodness and peace in all religions, he said that for more than 60 years several books on the world's major religions and prophets have been published by Uzbek authors.

The writers have been very critical of the distortions made in their national identity by what they refer to, with obvious bitterness, as Russian colonialism and imperialism that entered Central Asia about 135 years ago, and despite radical changes and revolutionary slogans after the October Revolution, 1917, continued to maintain a posture of domination as evidenced by a deliberate attempt at 'Russification' of their culture, language, script, name and nomenclature in the name of socialist solidarity and integration of the Soviet Union.

They said it was almost like a situation where a whole nation was living in conditions of 'house-arrest'. They emphasised that they would now like to rebuild their society, polity and economy in conditions of sovereign independence, according to their own heritage and genius.

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TWO major concerns seem to dominate their endeavours at this point of their history. One, to stabilise the foundation of a productive, efficient and demand-fulfilling economy, and two, to build a secular, democratic state-structure in their multi-ethnic society.

The disintegration of the Soviet economy, due to its manifest incapacity and inadequacy of the alternative socialist strategy of industrialisation in providing better, more efficient and globally comparative consumer products, has left them in a quandary. They have to work out two transitions simultaneoulsy—transition from an integrated all-Union Soviet economy, managed by the central command and administration system, mostly from Moscow, to an indigeneous national economy, capable of responding to the urgent basic demands of its citizens; and a transition from a bureaucratically managed economy to a mixture of market-friendly and planned-priority pattern of economy. As of now no comprehensive blueprint for such a transformation seems to have been worked out.

On the ground level, however, any visitor to Central Asia, as to China, would be struck by an interesting indigenous phenomenon and institution, which may be called *bazar culture*. This is in sharp contrast to the total elimination of private market system in Russia and Eastern Europe. The *bazar*—the traditional market-place, with its origins in pre-industrial, barter-oriented feudal times—still persists, will all its noises, smells, bargaining transaction, etc. as the rudimentary lfie-line of basic supply and demand of essential goods in food and clothing for the people. Despite all the state controls under socialist dispensation, the *bazars* have remained a fairly open, competitive and mostly privately operated parallel economy. In Tashkent, near the Tillya-Sheikh mosque in the old part of the town, and in Samarkand, in the shadow of the famous Bibi-Khanam (wife of Timur) mosque, together with state-managed departmental stores called *GUMs* and *SUMs*, the traditional *bazar* have also coexisted, supplying fresh vegetables, fresh fruits and dry fruits brought regularly in horse-carts by nearby farmers and having garmet shops, provision stores, tailors, barbers, shoe-makers, etc. One might even say that systems may come and systems may go, but the *bazar culture* in Central Asia goes on forever. Indeed even Stalin and his ghosts could not haunt out of existence the perennial oriental *bazar* in Central Asia, which remained a safety-valve against the vagaries of state-run stores.

In pursuance of building a secular-democratic polity, they do face the possible threat of religious fundamentalism, especially due to their neighbourhood with Iran, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, from where revivalist influences do emanate. But, as of now, there is no objective reason to exaggerate this fear. Most of the Muslims in Central Asia, together with Azerbaijan and 13 Autonomous Republics within Russia (Bashkiria, Buryat, Kabardino-Balkaria, Daghestan, Tataria, Checheno-Ingushetia, Chuvash, Yakut, Abkhasi, Adzhar, Kara-Kalpak, Nakhichevan and Karachai-Circassia) accounting for about 50 million people are imbued with secular orientation and enlightened outlook.

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THE American media and a section of its leadership has assiduously propagated the bogey of an 'Islamic arc', an 'Islamic bloc', and that too with nuclear capability, that would threaten regional and global peace. Senator Pressler, during his recent visit to India and Pakistan, has even alleged that there is the prospect of sharing of nuclear technology between the Central Asian republics and other Muslim countries, especially Pakistan. But on close examination of ground realities, and based on our own discussions and impressions in Tashkent and Alma Ata, one can state that the Americans and the Jewish press are again indulging in building a fanciful and perverse facade of what may be called Islamic 'demonology' as a possible adversary of their strategic interests in the region, and in the bargain scare India and secular forces in Asia. When questioned on this issue by our delegation, the Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan, T.S. Suleimenov, categorically refuted the allegation of any understanding or agreement with any country including Pakistan, for sharing of their nuclear technology or capability. He said they had already denied it officially, and it is sheer propaganda. This was further confirmed during President

Nazerbayev's recent visit to New Delhi.

There is no such political, diplomatic or strategic monolith called the 'Islamic bloc', and there is no prospect of such an aggregation emerging in the background of the recent wars between Iraq and Iran, Iraq and Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Afghanistan, etc., not to mention the perennial Sunni-Shia schism that doctrinally divides Iran and Saudi Arabia, and Iran and Pakistan. It is well known that since the Kemalist revolution of 1920, Turkey had never been associated with this sort of religious pan-Islamic solidarity for common political goals. The Central Asian republics, with more than half a century of socialist orientation marked by hundred per cent literacy, access to advanced scientific education, recognition of equality of men and women, and positive public role of their emancipated women in many sectors of activities are most unlikely to emulate either Iran or Pakistan, much less Saudi Arabia. Their leadership is predominantly against any effort to use religion as a vehicle of political power.

Of course in the process of building a new national identity, when you go back to the roots to discover your heritage, the pervasive presence of religion is all too apparent, especially in traditional festivals, marriage and death rites, inheritance laws, inter-personal ethics, primordial outlook on life and the world, etc. But this aspect of religion as a sub-stratum of culture, social life and primordial ethics is different from religious fundamentalism. It should be remembered specifically that Central Asian Islam has been a great civilisational force marked by rationalist traditions and secular learning for centuries.

As an illustration it may be added that in no region of the global spread of Islam, from Morocco to Sinkiang, so many scientists, innovators, philosophers and encyclopaedists have flourished as in Central Asia, in the medieval period. They had been, however, erroneously and ignorantly referred to by some Western scholars either as *Arabs* (only because they wrote in Arabic—the then prevalent language of intellectual discourse) or as *Islamic thinkers* (only because they were born Muslims). Some of the world famous pioneering scientists and rationalists were *Musa Al-Khwarizmi* (d.840), the famous mathematician, who translated Sanskrit works in mathematics and astronomy, and introduced the Indian decimal system, hence mathematics is called *Al-Hindsa*—the science of India; *Al-Fargani* (d.860), astronomer and engineer; *Abu Nasr al-Farabi* (d.950), scientist, philosopher, encyclopaedist; *Abu Ali Ibn-Sina* or *Avecenna* (d.1037), the greatest name in medical science, the author of the *Canons of Medicine*, which for 700 years was the main text in Europe; *Abu Rehan al-Biruni* (d.1048), historian, geographer, mathematician, astronomer, and author of the most comprehensive book on India, *Kitab-al-Hind* (Book of India); *Mirza Ulugh Beg* (fiftheenth century), astronomer, mathematician, ruler of Samarkand, uncle of Emperor Babar whose famous observatory became the model of Raja Jai Singh's obsevatory at Jaipur and Delhi.

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IN this backdrop Islam in Central Asia is a mosaic of at least four streams of Muslim consciousness—the *rationalist-scholarly* scientific Islamic tradition; the *humanist-compassionate* Sufi tradition especially of the Naqshabandi, Suhrawardi and Kubrawl *silsilas;* the *socialist-secular* contemporary synthesis between Islamic heritage and socialist ideals; and the *traditional-madrasa oriented* conformist Islam. In such a mosaic of Islamic traditions, and given the orientation of the existing power-elite who have a stake for their own survival in keeping the secular-civil structures intact, it is most improbable and unlikely that Central Asia would either emulate Iran, Pakistan or Saudi Arabia in its political orientation, both in domestic and international politics. The Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan, Suleimanov, said: "We are not a religious state, though most of our people are Muslims." The bogus projection of 'Islamic fundamentalism' acquiring a contiguous territorial base, pan-Islamic unity and strategic solidarity, is the latest instance of deliberate disinformation propagated by interested power-groups. Why nobody speaks of the openly revivalist Russian Orthodox Church, with its slogan of Mother Russia (which had recently celebrated with great fanfare the millenary festival of Christianity), seeking to build a Slav-Christian imperuum with Ukraine and Belarus, in collusion with the Roman Catholic clergy and the Pope in Europe. For argument's sake one might as well speak of Christian fundamentalism, spanning Western and Eastern Europe, as a threat to peace and security. But this would be equally fanciful and unrealistic.

The Central Asian republics naturally give the highest priority to their basic concern for building a viable economic system. Every offer made to them, from any country, irrespective of that country's internal politics and their other motives in doing too, is welcome, because 'beggars are not choosers'. Between September and December 1991, Turkey played host to three Presidents—Niyazov of Turkmenia, Karimov of Uzbekistan and Nazarbayev of Kazkhstan, and President Turgut Ozal himself visited Alma Ata in March 1991. They also cultivated Kirghizia and Azerbaijan. Turkey signed a widerange of bilateral agreements with each Central Asian republic mainly in trade, economy, culture and educational cooperation. Most significantly, Turkey has agreed to provide financial and technical assistance for the modernisation of industrial enterprises. Iran had despatched its Foreign Minister, Ali Akbar Velayati, in November-December 1991 to expand the existing economic and cultural relations, especially in banking, insurance, transportation, tourism and higher education. They offered to open air-links and extend port and transit facilities to these land-locked states.

Pakistan also went in top gear, by sending a 20-member high-level delegation in November-December 1991, comprising parliamentarians, academics, journalists, public men representing trade and industry, and government officials, under their Minister of Economic Affairs, Sardar Asif Ali. They offered to different Central Asian republics several facilities like joint ventures, commercial credits, food supplies, medicines, cement factory, telecommunication system, offers of new trade routes for commerce, use of port facilities, opening of railway lines connecting Central Asian cities to Karachi, use of river navigation on the Indus, use of roadways and airlinks, etc. An estimated expenditure of $ 4-5 buillion, spread over a period of eight to 10 years, has ben envisaged, if appropriate agreements are signed. As a consequence of this visit, the leaders and media of Pakistan were euphoric in proclaiming that Pakistan had achieved a breakthrough in its relations with the Central Asian republics". Yet, in a revealing manner the leader of the team in his exclusive interview to *The News* of Pakistan (January 9, 1992) also admited most significantly "that Pakistan's Afghan policy could create an obstacle in ties with the Central Asian republics". He admitted about Uzbek "concern related to the Afghan situation". He mentioned that "Tajikistan is worried over our Afghan policy", and that "an extremely conservative Islamic Government will not be acceptable to the Tajik population of Afghanistan". He added that "the leader of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, expressed exactly the same fears and concerns" about Pakistan's Afghan policy. Sardar Asif Ali also stated that the Central Asian republics "have a unified policy towards Afghanistan", and admitted that "by sending arms to the Kabul regime (of Najibullah) a signal to Pakistan has been sent". He added ominously that "if the Afghan stalemate continues... these countries may become hostile towards Islamabad because of their own security problems." In the light of these quotations, nothing more be added to negate Pakistan's exaggerated claim of a 'breakthrough' in its relations with the Central Asian republics. Economic transactions need not change political approaches and basic policy orientation.

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FRANKLY, we could clearly see that in the minds of the leadership of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan there are many reservations about Pakistan as a state, as a polity, and more so about its rather narrow religion-dominated orientation in national and regional politics. Therefore, they have some hesitation in responding even to Pakistan's suggestion to join the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) of which Turkey and Iran are other members, and more than that to accept membership of the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC), despite their predominantly Muslim population.

Saudi Arabia has been also pumping money for the repairs and construction of mosques, and publication of religious books, in thehope of winning support of the conservative Sunni section of the people.

Our clear impression has been that they have strong ethnic, linguistic and cultural affinity with Turkey. There are undercurrents of Pan-Turkic nationalism, but even that in a loose confederal form, even in its patten of close cooperation between the Central Asian states themselves. They would have a secular basis of solidarity, and not a form of Islamic fundamentalism, which has been so repugnant, on the one side, to the Kemalist traditions of modern nation-building in Turkey and on the other, to the main ethos of socialist transformation, which anyhow remains the foundation of contemporary Central Asian Muslim societies. The sources of inspiration for the new Turkic identity, based on secular polity, raionalism and modernity, are the personalities of statesman like Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, philosopher like Zia Gokulp, and the women's lib leader like Khalida Adib Khanum. Gokulp said: "Belong to the Turkish nation, the

Muslim religion and European civilisation". Ataturk while presenting the new civil code for adoption in 1926, based on Swiss law, declared: "We have decided to accept modern civilisation and its living principles without any condition or reservation." Khalida Adib Khanum in her lectures in Jamia Millia Islamia in early thirties spoke about "the meeting of the East and the West in Turkey—the birth of a new civilisation of enlightenment".

It should be recalled that a dynamic Central Asian Communist leader, Sultan Galiev, had spoken in the Comintern in 1928 of the distinct Turkic identity and about the need to build a pan-Turkic republic within the Soviet Union. Stalin not only opposed this proposal, but saw to it that Sultan Galiev was denigrated as a bourgeois-nationalist, and eventually liquidated.

It is quite manifest that in the consciousness of the leaders of Central Asia, Turkey and India loom large as preferred Asian neighbours, with whom they would like to build multiple and stable contacts. Next to Turkey, of all the Asian neighbours, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan have the warmest sentiments towards India. We have a great historic opportunity to grasp and to play an innovative role by working out tangible plans of cooperation, to be worked out on specific areas by specially constituted committees of experts. We can help build a comity of secular-democratic states in Central Asia for regional and mutually beneficial cooperation as a counter to the policy of confrontation, that is the game that the religious fundamentalists would like to play.

There is need for high level ministerial and representative non-official delegations to visit all the five republics at the earliest, as a follow-up to the understanding already reached for mutally beneficial relations. The moot question is: Shall we respond to this challenge, and help build a region of considerable political and strategic relevance to our national and regional interests or by default and delay and unimaginative prevarication, allow us to be marginalised by inimical interests and political adversaries, that will upset the balance of power in our part of the globe? ■

SAMAL: Budget

(Continued from page 14)

turing of tariff rate, sweeping cuts in customs duties on a large number of commodities including capital goods, project imports, etc. as well as full exemption of customs duties on a few goods such as glazed newsprint, etc. resulting in a net loss of Rs 2023 crores; (vi) permission to foreign investment in the Indian capital market and in the critical infrastructure sector including power, hydrocarbon, oil and gas; and (vii) promise of a further reduction in administrative controls of E E R A over companies exceeding 40 per cent foreign equity and also non-resident Indians.

Various other steps have been taken by the Finance Minister in his Budget to liberalise the domestic economy by giving greater role to the private sector such as (i) abolition of government control on capital issues including premium fixation; (ii) allowing the private sector in infrastructure including the power sector; (iii) permitting the new private sector mutual fund to operate in the capital market; (iv) giving more concession in capital gains and wealth tax and no change in the corporate tax structure; (v) liberalisation of financial sector on the basis of Narasimham Committee by allowing a larger role for the private sector in banking, reduction in statutory liquidity ratio and cut in floor level of interest rates on commercial advance by one percentage point; and (v) further sale of equity of Rs 1000 crores of public sector undertakings even after disinvestment of equity holding of the PSUs to the tune of Rs 2500 crores.

Other steps on the basis of the IMF conditionalities are: reduction of subsidies on export, food and fertiliser in the name of proper pricing policy and a cutback on spending on rural development, social and poverty alleviation programmes.

Thus in the game between different interest groups in India, the industrial captains won but in the larger game between two players, that is, the local capitalists and multinationals, it is the transnationals who won the match with their bulldogs, the IMF and the IBRD. In the process the rich will gain and the burden of adjustment will be borne by the poor. ■

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Perestroika and After

A Critique of Developments in former Soviet Union

PIJUSH SOM

This article was written in December last just before the complete disintegration of the USSR. In view of its abiding relevance, it is being presented here.

—Editor

The recent developments in the USSR and Eastern Europe have had painful effects not only on Communists but also on socialists in general. Socialism is not only a body of doctrine but also a political movement. Historically, socialism is prolific of its aims and methods. Socialists belong to opposing schools pursuing different aims and methods such as the Syndicalists, the Guild Socialists, or the Communists. The noted philosopher, Joad, has rightly said:

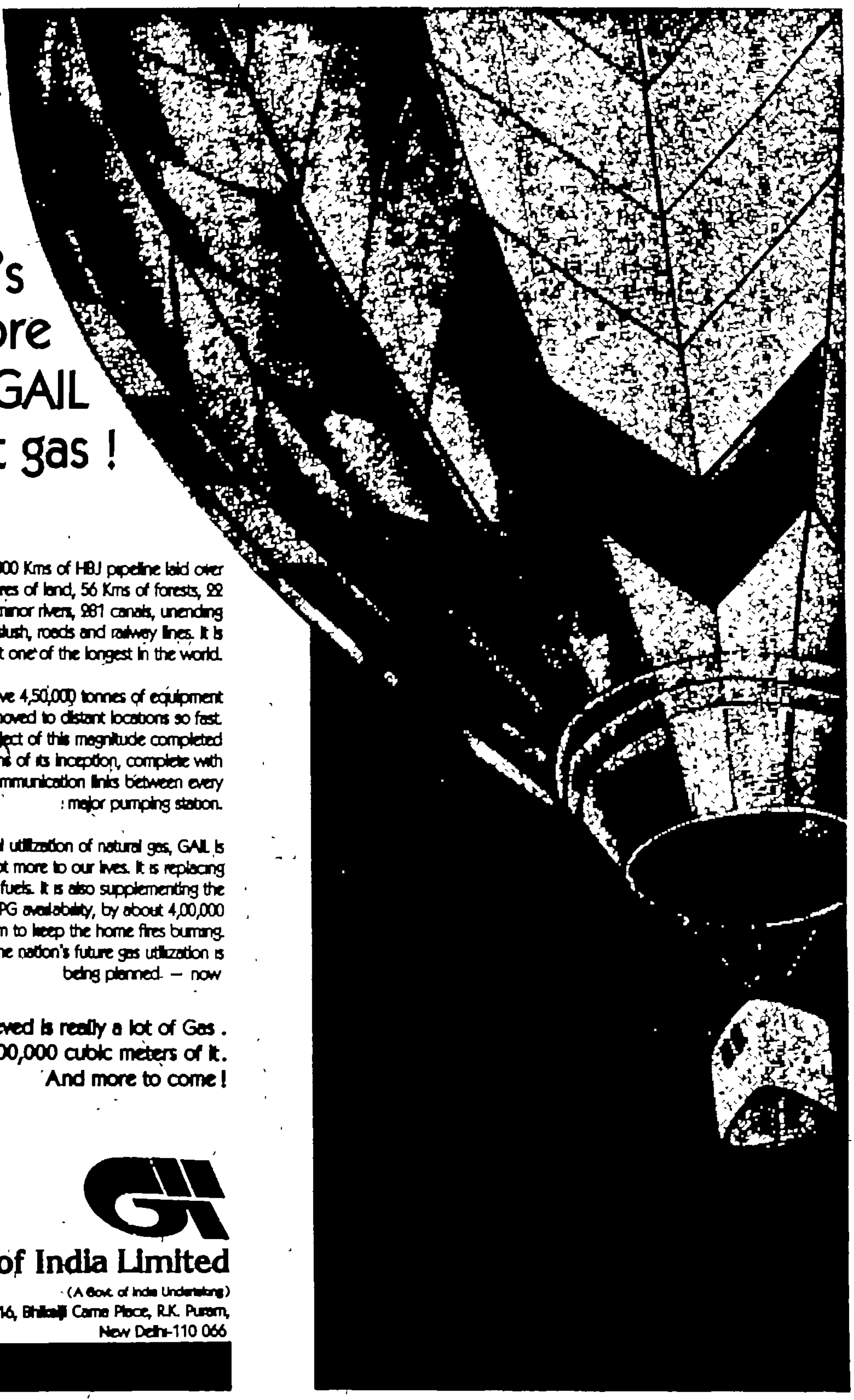
> As the advocates of socialism are very numerous..., the literature on the subject is enormous, with the result that it is hard to say in what exactly it is that socialism consists. Socialism, in short, is like a hat that has lost its shape because everybody wears it.

Ideology versus "Realpolitik"

Be that as it may, Karl Marx is considered as the father of scientific socialism. The 'Theory of Value' and the materialistic conception of history are the pillars of his theory. The influence of the concept of class war, as developed by Marx, had a deeper impact on the thoughts and actions of the Communists. A critique of the Theory of Value in the context of the changing scientific-technological scenario and its impact on the management and organisation structure of production has not been as popular in the communist movement as the concept of class war. The sense of euphoria with the success of communist revolutions in Russia and China within the time-frame of three decades perhaps did not allow fresh thinking on the impact of the rapid techno-economic changes in the so-called capitalist countries after the Second World War. This is due to the nature of revolutionary politics in Russia and China where personal ambition, coterie rule and intrigues became no less relevant than the economics of the production stage. But the former have been always considered irrelevant in Marxian theory. As it happened, the spin-offs of the revolution and civil war made these factors more relevant to the sustainability of the concept of "communism in one state" than the foundation of economics. For, the "communist state" is not an import of the Marxian theory and is a contradiction in terms.

Prof Som, a noted civil engineer, is a former Dean, Faculty of Engineering and Technology, Jadavpur University, Calcutta. He is presently the Vice-President of Science for Society, Calcutta.

The Marxian theory of historical determinism is presumably based on a few case studies on the past social changes. It is a speculative construction of the future stages of social change from the capitalistic society to a classless one. It is an induction from the particular to the general and, therefore, an attempt to describe the future society as a type. In experiments with communist revolutions we are shown much deviations from what had been foretold. For example, the revolution, according to the Marxian prescription, is to occur as soon as economic conditions are ripe for its occurrence. If it is right, then the revolution should have occurred first in Germany. But it occurred in Russia where, according to Lenin, the preconditions for the socialistic management of production were absent. The next revolution took place in China which was far behind the industrialised liberal states. Again, history does not establish that the advancement of capitalism in liberal states has sharpened class war to the point of an explosion. On the contrary, the recent explosion in Russia after the announcement of *perestroika* and *glasnost* has proved that the shortest route to modern capitalism is via communism. The Marxist theory and its various interpretations to present it as a comprehensive description of future social changes have not proved to be absolutely true. Clearly, the obfuscation of the people's mind during the communist revolution and civil war do not allow



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scientific scepticism about the Marxian theory to grow. Devoid of this scientific scepticism, the Marxian theory has been gradually reduced to an idea. If it is true to suggest that ideas play no major role in "realpolitik", that is, in determining the course of political events, it is idle to debate whether some ideas are better than others.

After the revolution Lenin did not have much practical help from the teachings of Marx and Engels to evolve the economic and national policy in Russia. Lenin's thoughts in the Russian context were concretised, *inter alia*, in his new economic policy (NEP) which had a momentous shift towards the evolutionary socialism organised under the worker's state. Lenin took a position between the communist revolutionary thought and the idea of the collectivist state advocated by the evolutionary socialists whose ideals were best stated in the British Labour Party pamphlet, *Labour and the New Social Order*, published in 1919. This radical modification of Lenin's outlook on communism under the working class state differed materially from the views and expectations of the pressure groups born out of revolution and civil war. They had a stake in the position of power and control achieved by means of the revolutionary class war. The October Revolution had involved this risk, which the evolutionary socialists will not like to take. History cannot be erased and Russia found its leader after Lenin's death to make her tryst with destiny.

After Lenin's dealth in 1924 the struggle for power continued for three years between Stalin and Trotsky over the choice between the former's "communism in one country" and the latter's "world revolution". After the failure of communist revolutions in Germany and Hungary in 1919, Stalin's thesis gained more support from the pressure groups within the party and Trotsky was eventually outmanoeuvred. The Stalinist era began. The NEP was abandoned. Whatever Stalin thought and did during 1928-53 is a subject of criticism today. To judge the ethics of power exercised by Stalin one should also bear in mind the existentialist sermon that "existence is the essence of values". Let us examine the factors governing the existence of the communist state during the thirties.

Stalin in the Historical Perspective

Hitler became the Chancellor of Germany in 1933. He banned the Communist Party and took measures to suppress it in Germany. To seek protection from the German threat, the Soviet Union joined the collective security of the League of Nations. When the Munich Agreement made Stalin believe that Britain and France were not prepared to fight against Hitler, the Soviet Union in 1939 signed a non-aggression pact with Hitler leaving Poland as a buffer state. Thus during the thirties Stalin was in search of security. He had no natural ally in international relations. He was buying time to set his own house in order. He was compelled to maintain the forced stability in the Soviet Union for rapid industrial growth. This enabled him to fight aggression from the West, that is, Germany. Stalin's policy achieved this goal in a remarkable manner for an agrarian country like Russia which had been under Czarist rule till 1917.

Stalin came to absolute power after Trotsky's defeat in 1928. He died in 1953. Assuming the impact of his policy having continued for a decade after his death, let us examine the industrial growth in the Soviet Union during 1929-1963 comparing her productions of coal, steel and electricity with those of the USA, the UK and Germany.

	USSR	USA	UK	Germany
Coal (million tonnes)				
1929	50	500	270	180
1963	520	400	210	150 *
Steel (million tonnes)				
1929	15	65	10	16
1963	80	110	20	30 *
Electricity (billion KWHs)				
1929	25	80	25	60
1963	400	1050	170	170 *

*Figures are for West Germany

Stalin's Five Year Plans were responsible for this staggering success of industrial development within three decades of which the last one recorded a phenomenal growth. In agriculture, Stalin's policy of collectivisation organised farms upto 10,000 acres with mechanisation. Use of farm machinery, introduction of better methods and development of marginal lands, elimination of private ownership of land and collectivisation of land released peasant manpower from the land to join the labour force required in mines and factories for industrial advancement. Almost all children got school education for being converted into competent industrial workforce with indoctrination in communist beliefs. Despite his failure in the agricultural sector, Stalin could enforce his dictatorship successfully because of the following material conditions:

(a) Hardship and shortages, lack of personal freedom and obedience to the authority had been the characteristics of life in Czarist Russia. These were perpetuated by the Communists more vigorously for industrial development.

(b) In the early period of the post-revolutionary era the common people of Russia enjoyed a higher standard of living and hoped for a better future which was believed to be threatened by the emergence of Hitler.

(c) Development between two world wars and the consequent international relations engendered by the Rome-Berlin axis in Europe made Stalin's dictatorship permanent in the "realpolitik" of saving "communism in one state". For there is reason to believe that immediately after the revolution the USSR, which had no tradition of liberal democratic government within its multi-ethnic vast territory, could only opt for a dictator to achieve the phenomenal industrial development to face Germany which attacked Russia in 1941. Indeed there was no bluff in perceiving the threat from Germany.

Therefore, Stalin's transitional dictatorship requires a study in the historical context of the October Revolution in the backward state of Russia which encountered immediately after the revolution a nexus of hostile international relations leading to the attack by a very powerful industrial nation like Germany. To eulogise Lenin's conceptual NEP and decry Stalin for his means to achieve "communism in one state" do not constitute a correct assessment of the post-revolutionary scenario of international relations dominated by force and anti-communism. After the Second World War, Stalin's dictatorship became more rigid on account of several reasons which are being discussed below.

The Second World War proved to be a major watershed in international relations on several counts:

(a) During the War and afterwards the USA clearly abandoned the principle of isolation from European politics enshrined in the Monroe Doctrine.

(b) The US intervention in European politics with vigorous militarism and aid programmes like the Marshal Plan was aimed at resisting the advancement of communism in Europe.

(c) The last hope of hardline European Communists in securing the overrun of Europe by Stalin's army after the fall of Berlin was strategically emasculated by the Yalta Agreement and the subsequent developments of the NATO and Aid Plans.

(d) The impact of the dominoe theory on US political strategists dictated Truman's policies of containment and Cold War against the USSR. The fallout of the Cold War in the Third World made the US reactions to the political developments there anti-USSR. The world became truly bipolar. The threats of a nuclear war and arms race escalated during the Cold War.

(e) The technological dimension of international relations increased to such an extent that the transnational corporations (TNCs) dealing with informatics, chemical and heavy industries influenced government decisions in their own interest in the non-communist states. The resources—both human and physical—of the free world were being organised on a global scale. The TNCs controlled the flow of funds in R & D intensive production technologies, the secrets of which were strictly guarded. The scope of R&D and transfer of technology through intra-firm arrangements alone were dictated by the TNCs in several countries of Europe and the Third World on the basis of the comparative advantages of political economics. By contrast, the technological challenges of the TNCs and their governments, of which the USA was the most dominant till the eighties had to be faced singularly by the Party-state of the USSR whose resources were made tenuous by stretching it for supporting communist interests in the Third World and the COMECON countries as well.

In the context of these developments, Stalin's dictatorship became absolutely rigid to gain military strength based on high technology. This was achieved at the cost of the human factor and liberalism. It is one thing to be a good Communist, but it is completely different to resolve the contradictions of a "communist state" as its head when challenged by a superior technology provided by big corporations working in collaboration with their governments.

Consumerism

Militarism apart, the USSR increasingly faced the challenge of consumerism in the affluent societies of the West and the USA. And consumerism in these countries was supported by the technological spin-offs of informatics, chemical engineering and space programmes—all built around military goals but utilised by the innovative entrepreneurs in a free market catering to the public. By 1980s the main characteristics of the free-market economy of the liberal states emerged as follows:

(a) In the field of heavy industry, chemicals and pharmaceuticals, and informatics a few big corporations are supported by governments in the form of loan financing, market control and tariff regulations.

(b) The production of goods and services in consumer goods' market are unregulated. Entry and exit of entrepreneurs from the consumer goods market are determined by market forces. The profligacy of energy demand and economic surfeit characterises this market. Consumerism becomes responsible for pollution and degradation of environment which grows alarmingly. Liberty in the affluent societies is equated with their governments' capacities to underwrite the social cost of consumerism with an unregulated free-market economy.

The convergence between the socialist system of the USSR and the capitalist one of the liberal states in regard to the first characteristic is complete in principle. In regard to the second characteristic, the divergence between the two systems is attempted to be bridged by means of *perestroika* and *glasnost* in the USSR. Prof Galbraith's analysis in favour of this argument needs a deeper study to understand the impact of *perestroika* and *glasnost* on history.

Infirmities of Perestroika

Gorbachev's *perestroika*, that is, the restructuring policy, has several infirmities:

(1) It did not resolve the issues related to nationalities in the interest of the Soviet republic. On the contrary, it exploded the Stalinist myth that the October Revolution, unlike the French Revolution, made the concept of bourgeois nationalism irrelevant to the socialist state.

(2) The implementation of *perestroika* in a socio-economic-political structure governed by a command system precluding free market in any sphere of life for about seven decades was not judiciously planned. The slogan of *glasnost* and *perestroika* in the extant socio-economic conditions engendered amongst the Soviet people a madness without any method.

(3) The emergence of the political instability pursuant to *perestroika* should have been easy to visualise. *Perestroika* and *glasnost* are aimed at weakening the Party-state which was responsible for the planning and control of heavy industry, chemical engineering, informatics, mining, utilities, etc. Who was expected to fill up the vacuum after the fall of the Party-state? Foreign TNCs are not expected to immediately come to the rescue in an unwholesome social situation. Free market and indigenous big corporations cannot be expected to grow by wishing for them after announcing *perestroika*. Neither could the Party survive nor did the free market come into existence to serve the people already belligerently divided along ethnic and regional lines. The results are disastrous.

(4) *Perestroika* suffers from a 'technology fix' fuelling the desire for production and consumption of the metropolitan culture in the affluent West. By contrast, the urban crisis and the 'technology fix' are pushing the failed children of capitalism in urban areas of the liberal states towards socialistic ideas. *Perestroika* suffers from an illusion too.

Therefore, what we observe as the outcome of *perestroika* is disintegration of the communist states in the USSR and East Europe. *Perestroika* and *glasnost* do not resolve the contradictions of the communist state and people there do not know as yet where they would go from here. Freedom is easier to shout about than to practise in life.

Lessons

The lessons of the absurd drama of Gorbachev's restructuring "socialism in one state" are:

1. Society is pluralistic. Social groups intersect with economic classes. The same economic class does not imply same interests of social groups belonging to the class. Social groups have linkages with their members across the class boundary. Pluralism cannot be ironed out by totalitarianism.
2. Given the pluralism the contours of social thoughts give rise to the polynodal morphology in social perception, anticipation and participation in socio-economic and political activities. Democratic centralism is incompatible with this social model of participatory actions and is tantamount to command bureaucracy.
3. In the context of the technological revolution there is an irrational quest for "labour productivity" by substituting capital and energy for human labour. This is bound to lead to unsustainable levels of resource use and environmental degradation as well as unemployment. Less profligacy in energy demand and economic surfeit will lead to less damaging ways of production, consumption and disposal of waste. These will be fully consistent with full employment because these will be more rationally labour-intensive. Sustainable global economy will need people's participation based on scientific-technological awareness and not advertisements of the media making continuous propaganda in favour of high-tech but useless consumerism. Socialist leadership and regulations which care for all are necessary to avoid militarism and consumerism both of which are net-energy inflationary and unsustainable in the long term.
4. New humanism in the age of 'technology fix' must be imbibed by the people who should then ask their governments to recognise a threshold in energy consumption beyond which society succumbs to technological processes with the marginalisation of both nature and man. Capturing the power of state has been the main concern of a political party. Unless the society is imbued with human values, care for the environment and ecology without economic surfeit as the only expression of high-technology, the state power will corrupt everyone from top downwards.
5. Pursuant to the technological revolution in super-techno societies after the Second World War the centres of power are being concentrated in several TNCs. They can capture centralised organisations like a highly regulated collectivist state, closely coupled insular party system, and military dictatorship to use them by proxy for delivering technologies, products and patterns of

consumption without the appropriate socio-economic context, especially in the Third World. Metropolitan culture gains primacy with the transfer of these irrelevant technologies in economically backward countries. This heightens the existing core-periphery contradictions which gradually destroy the cooperation and collaboration of the Party system with the people. There is a great need to evaluate the appropriateness of technologies for transfer by means of participatory action research (PAR) involving scientists, technologists and the relevant social groups using the socialist party as a forum.

6. In the Third World technology should aim at self-reliance of the people. This can be achieved by tailoring technology through functional literacy of target groups. The use of informatics for the decentralised modes of production, information transactions, and small scale entrepreneurial development with science and technology should be the policy for technological upgradation of the society. Borrowing high technologies and foreign capital in an unregulated economy will push the poor and highly populated countries of the Third World into a socio-political wilderness where the TNCs and local compradore class will exploit the people. It must be borne in mind that technology is socially neutral. We must use it as it serves the people's purpose.

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7. To weave the various social groups and voluntary organisations without fear or favour to develop fellowship for social services should be the first concern of a truly socialist party today. To depend on the omni-competent Party-state for social, cultural and economic activities will lead to a socially unwholesome situation where self-reliance will be a far cry. No amount of *perestroika* and *glasnost* at a later date can yield social integrity from this de-humanised Party-based passive social order. Power of the Party-based command system must not be equated with a virtuous social order. As Socrates says that virtue is knowledge, the socialists must be imbued with the organised knowledge of all aspects of human existence before they can organise society with humanism.

8. Socialist developmental urge for resource management should be governed by the humane principle: we have enough to meet the needs of people but not their greed. This is the condition of our freedom and fellowship in society. Without them individuals will degenerate themselves in a rat-race for survival in a consumerist society where no restructuring is feasible.

9. Science and technology should be applied to upgrade the traditional technologies and to decentralise functionally new economic activities in small and medium units, as far as practicable, with environmental care and ecological development. These units of production in a vast country like India will form through a system of functional representation the Regional Economic Council to determine "What, How, and for Whom" of production, manners of exchange and distribution. The Regional Political Council will organise executive and judicial powers to sustain the economic activities of the people and to maintain the socio-cultural integration. These centres of economic and political powers are to be federated in a large country at the national level. The role of the socialists will be to orchestrate these developments with a holistic approach and to ensure that the organisation of power be linked with the economic and socio-cultural activities of people with self-determination at the neighbourhood level. ■

Gender, Poverty and Cats on a Pilgrimage

MRINAL PANDE

> India has invested and continues to invest far less in its women workers than in its working men. Women are less endowed with productive resources... all of them could bring higher returns to their labour. (*World Bank Country Study on Gender and Poverty*. December 1991).

When strong advocates of sovereignty of the market begin to project themselves as even stronger advocates of the rights of women (especially the poorest ones), my traditional alfactory lobes begin to smell a rat. The common Hindustani proverb comes to mind—*Sau, sau choohe khai ke billi Haj ko chali* (having polished off a hundred mice the cat leaves on a holy pilgrimage).

The above study on gender and poverty in India is salient proof of how, in the name of pro-women policies, women as human beings in the feminist context may be used as integral parts of a new international aid-system. It also illustrates how the traditionally low-visibility, high-risk feminine occupations, such as running a home and raising families, could be objectified in feminist contexts and then neatly coopted to justify high-visibility dole systems for the poor in the Third World countries. In objectifying women, the researchers lay the foundation for objectifying all social and personal relationships. What it feels to be a wife or a daughter or a daughter-in-law in the poverty-ridden Indian (particularly rural) contexts, and 'raising' the level of the 'consciousness', therefore, acquire a value for higher than that of demographic or economic statistics, and sophistry often replaces scientific data.

In contrast to the observations of the earlier (1991) *World Bank Development Report* which says that "markets in developing countries cannot generally be relied upon to provide people, especially the poorest, with adequate education..., health-care, nutrition and family planning services", the Gender and Poverty Report of the Bank says smoothly: ".... Market forces have great potential to influence gender ideology and to increase the perceived value of women." It then goes on to conclude that economic success for women will improve their own lives and those of all Indians For this end, women's access to goods and services, to productive assets and to factor markets must be improved and brought probably at par with that of the Indian male's. It even presents a generalised theory of how the 'inside-outside dichotomy' in the Indian society has rendered almost all Indian women invisible and forced them to stay inside their homes, where social custom has been exploiting them mercilessly, and how in contrast the Indian male who has uninhibited access to the 'outside' (and all its fringe benefits like access to the markets, goods and information) has hogged all available resources and aid.

Generalisations like those are used to promote the ultimate view that the economic environment in countries like India must be altered through new public policies, so that women's dependence on household processes may be reduced, and that "market forces should be allowed to influence the boundaries of culturally acceptable women's activity". With this, the urgings of the new international market-equations translate themselves effortlessly into urgings for restructuring of Indian families, as per the market requirements. It figures. If more women can be pursuaded to exchange their traditional family-based occupations for paid jobs in the new restructured economic system, they are far less likely to insist that their families hang on to their lands or looms or potter's wheels, or demand domestic bread when the market is offering imported cakes.

◆

THE experience of women activists shows that in the market the terms of oppression are not only dictated by history, culture and sexual and social divisions. They are also profoundly shaped at the site of oppression, and the way the employers and the employees negotiate, construct and establish their relative positions vis a vis power and profit.

A good example of this is the garment industry in our export-oriented free trade zones, which has been generating jobs for rural women in Gujarat and Maharashtra. On a visit to one such zone in Kerala this writer found that there the industry capitalists, instead of raising the levels of women's consciousness and earnings, further exploit their traditional submissiveness and go on to define skills, set wages (far lower than the stipulated minimum) and organise work-hours in ways that deprive poor rural women of any genuine chance for bonding or acquiring a status within the industry as regular workers (who could raise awkward questions and demands). Similarly, in the Dharavi slums in Bombay, the members of the

National Commission on Self-Employed Women in the Informal Sector (of which the writer was also a member) found that both the national and multinational companies that produce consumer goods such as toothpaste, toilet soap, *agarbatties* and *papads*, have increasingly and most blatantly been taking advantage of cheap home-based female labour in the slum areas or our metropolitan cities for fishing and packaging of their goods—at a fraction of what it'd have cost them otherwise. These home-based women workers, whose families are hit the hardest by economic recessions and factory-retrenchments, find the idea of work available at their doorstep so alluring, that they even accept the pitifully low wages and high rejection rates for finished goods, as also the overcrowding of their hovels with cartons and dangerous flammable material, without so much as a murmur of protest. The Shramshakti Report of the Commission recounts these encroachments of market forces upon the worlds of both the home-based and free-trade zone female workers' lives quite clearly. Yet the Gender and Poverty Report displays a selective amnesia when it refers to Shramshakti, and implies that increasing women's economic productivity anyhow shall affect their status or survival in a noticeably positive manner, and increased household incomes shall automatically mean increased freedom of speech and action for them. Industrial investments are thus equated, with the help of sophistry, to present the vision of a colonised economy as an aid to women's liberation in India.

Whether in sub-Saharan Africa or India, while analysing poverty and suggesting developmental strategies to counter it, it has been the standard practice for the country studies prepared by foreign donor agencies to condemn the mismanagement of the countries' economies by their post-colonial native governments, and their tradition-ridden societies. Equal emphasis and space are rarely, almost never, devoted to delineating how the colonial past and the Western style capitalist models of growth may also have contributed their mite to the socio-economic and ecological mess in which many of the Third World countries find themselves today. Studies such as the Gender and Poverty Report understandably choose to move, not along the lines of deductive analysis (where both the exploiters and their victims must have an identity), but along a generalised, sentimental and facile ideology. The ultimate aim is not to indulge in introspection and chart out a parallel model of growth and development for Third World countries with their specific historical pasts and presents, but to exonerate the Western models of development of all responsibility for their steady impoverishment:

> .... The evidence is overwhelming that access... who gets what. is closely related to gender in the Indian society ... part of the cultural definition of the female in India is her association with the inside, the home and the countryard where the family is cared for This is in contrast with males...

◆

SUCH, it's-them-not-us, explanations of economic and ecological disasters that have wrecked women's lives, simply will not do. Literate or otherwise, we Asian women know a lot more about being colonised and also how the whole system of colonisation in ex-colonial countries operates. In the last fortyfive years, most middle class mothers in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh have struggled with the idea that the only way their children can get reasonably good jobs is if they wean them away from their mother-tongues in infancy, send them to English-medium schools; and later help them apply for jobs abroad even though it may mean losing them forever. At some point or another, we have also looked after unfortunate relatives whose minds and personal lives have been severely damaged by traumatic experiences they underwent during their stays as 'excludable aliens' (a term coined by the Reagan Administration officials) abroad. Yet the male-career trajectory in our countries keeps moving closer (restructuring by restructuring) to the locomotives of the West.

Even women themselves, who have, at some point or another, worked for foreign donor-agencies which offer a dual pay system—one for the natives and another for their own—have raised their voices, only to be told that their subordination to the bosses in the workplace is defined by their position as natives recruited locally.

How can we then accept the reductionist account of women's oppression that denies the personal, everyday encounters that working men and women of the Third World have with the market forces, at both the collective and institutional levels?

There is an orthodoxy in the West-perfected social sciences which devalues the testimony of those engaged in social relationships and which claims an almost inviolate objective access to the entire world. Those of us who question this, risk being called romantic idealists who refuse to come to terms with the brute reality of the social and economic lives of Indian women.

Historically, women have been oppressed and continue to be oppressed; but historically we also know that to the extent world markets are constructed along racist and sexist lines, without a global restructuring, both men and Whites shall continue to accrue unfair advantages here. Inasmuch as men mostly hold the levers of political control and means of production both in India and the donor countries, domination of one sort may continue to serve as a paradigm for another. ■

Charting Unconventional Course

The following reports appeared in China Daily, *a newspaper published in English from Beijing, on February 28, 1992 and March 13, 1992 respectively. These give a measure of the extent to which China is currently charting an unconventional course eschewing Maoist orthodoxy. These also provide irrefutable evidence of the Chinese reformers' success in isolating their "Left" critics inside the country in the wake of the worldwide collapse of Stalinist totalitarianism which had masqueraded for long as "socialism".*

—Editor

Socialist China Mustn't Totally Reject Capitalism

Modern Chinese history leads us to the conclusion that socialism, not capitalism, is best for China.

But how a socialist China should look at capitalism and, more importantly, make use of the better side of capitalism for its own advantage, is of vital importance to the country, now in the fourteenth year of arduous but impressive reforms.

A front page article in the *People's Daily*, by Fang Sheng, contends that modern Chinese history has taught us that China, an economically backward country long ruled by feudalism, can only become strong and prosperous by learning from contemporary capitalism instead of rejecting it completely.

He said China can use some methods and measures commonly practised by capitalist societies to step up economic reforms, and to embody the superiorities of socialism. Excerpts follow:

As far as our country's economic construction is concerned, taking advantage of the part of capitalism that's useful to us means we need to develop foreign trade, introduce advanced technology and better management, and make use of foreign funds.

It also means we can absorb some of the economic theories, and make use of those economic policies, methods and measures that comply with the laws of mass production and commodity economy.

The scientific and technological achievements of civilisation are the common treasures of mankind. Socialist countries can take advantage of these just as much as capitalist societies can.

The way China looks at the capitalist world now is the result of a long process of cogitation.

Today, not many people reject the import of foreign funds and technology.

Yet this was quite unacceptable before China began to open up its doors to the outside world and reform.

In those days people were so rigidly dogmatic that anything practised by capitalist countries was feared as capitalistic and spurned.

Hostility between capitalism and socialism during those days was part of the cause.

In the past, when we talked about capitalism, we talked about it as a man-exploit-man system and nothing more. And while Chinese economists did a good job of criticising Western economic theories that whitewashed the capitalist system, they seldom ventured to study the theories, methods and measures that actually work for socialised mass production under a commodity economy.

Today, China can step up its economic reforms by adopting "capitalist measures" and still retain the superiorities of socialism.

These measures include stock markets, mergers, contracts, bidding and leasing, to name a few.

These are called "capitalist measures" for three reasons.

First, they are for the development of a commodity economy, which was once branded as equivalent to capitalism.

Second, they were in use long before the birth of socialism. Therefore, people are under the illusion that these measures are peculiar to capitalist countries.

Third, our text-book version of economics merely talked about them as part of the artifices of exploitation and hence peculiar to the capitalism.

Actually, they are not necessarily capitalist but can be used by any social system.

If we label them "capitalist" and reject them, we have only ourselves to blame. It is as much folly as that of some Soviets who, after the October Revolution, wanted to destroy the railways of the country because they were "bourgeois" railways of Czarist Russia.

A silkworm can get enmeshed in a web of its own spinning. A person can get his own hands and feet bound by doing the same. China should not do this again—it should take what's useful and good for its economic construction, regardless of the name.

As China makes more and more contacts with other countries, and learns from them, it will make mistakes. Sometimes undesirable influences of the capitalist world get in. Some people fear too much that bad influences from the capitalist world will undermine the socialist system.

A question immediately pops up: Is it worthwhile to open the window and let in fresh air, though some flies will come in as well?

Yes, it is worthwhile.

A lot of people are so overwhelmed by so many new ideas suddenly flooding in that they are unable to distinguish between good and bad as quickly as they should. But this can be cured through education, raising the people's standard of taste.

Actually, it can best be achieved by opening our windows wider to the outside world so that the people can learn more about other peoples and gradually and soberly learn to make sensible judgments. Absorbing the better part of the cultures of other peoples to enrich ourselves is the best way to safeguard our sociaist culture.

But closing the door again would be the wrong way—leaving aside the fact that it is impossible, anyway.

As an old Chinese saying goes: No one stops eating for fear of choking.

So China will not close its door and windows and suffocate just to keep out some petty flies.

Taking advantage of capitalism and stepping up economic reforms is the only way to make China strong. Closing the country to international exchanges will only keep it weak. ■

(Published in *China Daily* on February 28, 1992)

Polit-Bureau Meeting Vows to Accelerate Opening, Reforms

China stressed reform and open policies at the plenary session of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC), held in Beijing on March 9 and 10.

Presided over by Jiang Zemin, the meeting stressed that it is imperative to firmly carry out the Party's basic line of making economic construction the central task and adhering to the four cardinal principles and the policies of reform and opening to the outside world.

Yesterday all major newspapers in the capital and throughout the country carried the news story on their front pages.

The Polit-Bureau said China should seize the current opportunity to accelerate the pace of reforms and opening to the outside world, pushing forward the economic construction and continuing to march forward along the road of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

The meeting said that to liberate and develop the productive forces is the basic task of the Chinese Communist Party as it leads the Chinese people in building socialism. Therefore, it is imperative to unswervingly adhere to taking the economic construction as the central task, holding fast to the four cardinal principles, reforms and opening to the outside

This is the most valuable experience the Party has gained in leading the Chinese people in practice since the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party under the guidance of the ideas of Deng Xiaoping of building socialism with Chinese characteristics, the meeting said.

And it is also the main cause for the great changes that have taken place in socialist China in the past dozen years.

So long as the Party firmly grasps the basic line of "one central task and two main points" (economic construction, four cardinal principles, and open and reform policies) and will not waver in it even for one hundred years, the country will be able to maintain long-term stability and be hopeful.

The meeting emphasised that reform and opening to the outside world should be carried out in a bolder way and one should dare to make innovations and experimentations. It is necessary to futher emancipate the mind and adhere to the principle of seeking truth from facts. We should not only develop the productive forces under the condition of socialism, but also liberate the productive forces through reform.

To judge whether a move is "socialist" or "capitalist" will depend mainly on whether it will benefit the development of the productive forces under socialism, the enhancement of the comprehensive national strength of our socialist country and the promotion of the living standard of the people, the meeting said.

The pace of reform and opening to the outside world should be accelerated.

"For what we regard as correct, just try it and go ahead daringly," the meeting said.

Planning and market are both economic means. It is necessary to be good at applying these means to accelerate the development of the socialist commodity economy, the meeting said.

Those attending the meeting agreed that it is also imperative to be bold in absorbing and learning from all the achievements of civilisation, and in absorbing and learning from the advanced management methods of other countries in the contemporary world, including the developed countries in the West.

The 1990s are a crucial period, the meeting said. So people should have a clear view of the situation and take the opportunity to do a solid job, strive for efficiency and accelerate the rate of economic growth, in order to reach a new stage of economic development.

Science and technology are the first productive forces, the meeting stressed. In speeding up the rate of economic growth, it is necessary to rely on science, technology and education.

The meeting pointed out that China should pay particular attention to throughly investigating and studying the vital problems that affect reform and construction so as to form strategies and policies for the future and conscientiously organise their implementation.

The meeting discussed this and made necessary arrangements. Leaders at all levels should guard against formalism and bureaucracy and devote more of their energy to doing down-to-earth work, it said.

The meeting called on all the Party members, especially leaders at various levels, to conscientiously study the series of expositions of Deng Xiaoping on building socialism with Chinese characteristics and further enhance their consciousness of generally carrying out the Party's basic line.

While keeping vigilance against "Right" deviation, the main attention should be paid to guarding against "Left" deviation, the meeting said. It is necessary to strengthen the construction of advanced culture and ideology and the construction of democracy and legal system so as to consolidate and promote political stability and unity. ■

(*Xinhua*)

(Published in *China Daily* on March 13, 1992)

Collapse of USSR and the Marxist Utopia

AJAY KUMAR

There are many implications of the recent happenings in the Soviet Union. One of the most important is that now fullscale installation of the democratic framework in the country will be comparatively less difficult. Earlier, despite the reforms of Gorbachev, democratic changes could not be carried out fully on account of the firm grip of the communist organisation on different segments of society. The mass-force released in the process of retaliation of counter-revolution has simultaneously destroyed many obstacles on the path of democratic changes. Now it can be hoped that there will be spread of democracy in every sphere of life and society. This not only signifies the triumph of democracy but also reveals the demise of the people's faith in socialism. Moreover, it establishes the market economy and consumer culture as the 'new idol', to be worshipped by one and all and that makes the capitalist circles in the world jubilant. The major part of the world economy which was beyond the reach of the capitalist market till now has suddenly swung towards that market.

The way the Communists had made socialism synonymous with dictatorship, repulsion was bound to be generated. But the questions which need serious consideration in this regard are Has the ultimate goal of human progress been achieved? Is this the final stage of development? Is it possible to fulfil the aspirations of the masses through the means adopted by the countries of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union? The answer to these questions lies in the history of the modern industrial civilisation and the movement for socialism.

The very concept of socialism came into existence as a concept of ideal society to get rid of the problems which had their origin in the after-effects of the Industrial Revolution. Right from the beginning of the nineteenth century, Utopia was advocated as a rightful solution to the problems caused by the Industrial Revolution. The objective of almost all Utopians was to seek immediate relief from the tyranny of large-scale exploitation and unlimited hours of work in the polluted atmosphere of the factory. They held responsible the inhuman greed of the capitalists to garner huge profits from the pitiable conditions of the workers and their exploitation on a large scale. According to their line of thought, the system based on community or cooperative forces was the predominant element rather than the capitalist system. Among these thinkers Saint Simon, Charles Fourier and Robert Owen are particularly noteworthy. Robert Owen of Britain had also tried to run the industry at New Lanark in Scotland on cooperative lines on an experimental basis. But after a few unsuccessful attempts he gave up his hope and started stressing the need for labour struggle and workers' trade unions. Then came the lineage of the anarchist Proudhon, Marx, etc. Marx severely criticised the Utopian socialism and gave a new theory of his own communism and called it scientific but actually his imagination of communism was also a Utopian concept. The new theory of communism envisaged unity of the modern industrial society on the basis of equality and fraternity on the lines of primitive communism.

Whether this primitive communism of Marx ever existed or not is today debatable but as far as the concept of running the modern international industrial system on the basis of equality and fraternity is concerned, the very experiment has utterly failed. Finally, it has been established that the modern big industrial and commercial sectors, irrespective of their form of ownership, either public or private, can be managed only by the team of free-wheeling managers and bureaucrats.

One of the chief merits of the capitalist market system is that in this system the industrial and commercial sector always functions under tremendous pressure to maintain the efficiency of the services because of the so-called universality of the consumer, that is, the freedom to choose the best and cheapest product in the market. And this trend of the market forces them to cut down the expenditure heavily, especially the expenditure on the number of workers and on their welfare measures which are not necessary for the development of the concern but have become essential otherwise. This makes the market system of economy better equipped and far more efficient for inter-market rivalry and competition than the so-called socialist system, managed from one single centre and ruled by the bureaucracy. Being free from the pressures of competition and managed under strict central control in this system hardly any need is felt to cut down the administrative cost of production (expenditure on bureaucrats) and improve the quality of production and services to the customer. This way the Marxist-inspired Utopian economy which came into existence neither satisfied the fraternal feelings of the workers nor the consumer's urge for better and cheaper products which were available to large segments of population in the capitalist system. So it is obvious that the seeds of disintegration of Utopia lie in its inner-contradiction with the character of modern industry.

◆

MARX was so convinced of the necessity of socialism that he failed to take notice of other negative aspects of modern industry. Truly speaking, Marx was actually bewitched by the miracle of the ascending industrial society but other contemporary thinkers were clearly visualising the flaws of this civilisation as well as its inhuman and devastating aspect. Among those who challenged this civilisation on moral grounds the most important was the art critic, John Ruskin, a contemporary of Marx. Mahatma Gandhi was deeply influenced by his moral thoughts. William Morris of Britain who drew his inspiration from Ruskin denounced modern industrial goods on aesthetic grounds and in comparison praised the value of medieval goods produced by tradesmen. He said that art and artisanship are identical and in its creation man's satisfaction and delight of creativity must be expressed. Morris was a socialist and was greatly influenced by the thoughts of Marx; even then he clearly pointed out the basic weakness of the industrial process of production, towards which the Marxists never paid any attention. The modern industrial civilisation even at the height of its development utterly failed to give due attention to the pleasure of creativity in the process of production. Consequently, the hollow men tried to fill the void of life created as a result by the goods of entertainment and enjoyment and that is why the modern industrial civilisation is closely linked to consumer culture.

The criticism of Morris came in the nineteenth century but with the beginning of the twentieth century there emerged a whole series of counter-Utopian criticism on the industrial civilisation. In this series the most important are the novels of Aldous Huxley: *Brave New World* and *Ape and Essence*. In the first novel there is the picture of a future society (2500 AD) where men are produced in the laboratory with only those hereditary qualities which are essential for his concerned profession. This has been provided as the cure of illogicality of the men of the present industrial society which forces man to do that work which is against his natural desire. For this, different types of Alfa, Beta, etc. men are produced who have a natural inclination for their profession like the society of bees. This way all the possibility of differences of opinion and revolt in society has been buried right before they came into existence. The thinkers were kept away from the contact of the masses and confined to faraway unknown islands because in original thinking lies the seeds of dissatisfaction and disagreement in society. It seems to be a rehearsal of *Gulag*. But industrial society needs science, so science devoid of all its originality is kept alive like the art of cookery. In it we can clearly see the reflection of the present industrial society which quells the voice of revolt and moulds independent and original thinking of the general masses according to the liking of the privileged class of society through various means of communication.

In *Ape and Essence*, the probable culmination of this civilisation has been shown in the form of a shattered world after an atomic war and people worshipping the devil instead of God. The great priest of this civilisation rationalises it by saying that after the Industrial Revolution the power of God started diminishing, the devil became stronger day-by-day and after the atomic war the devil's rule has been finally established and that's why worshipping the devil is the only and right choice. If one compares the values of Christian religion with those of the modern industrial society one will find the logic of the great priest completely true. In the Bible it has been stated that one cannot worship God and money power (god of wealth) simultaneously and the very basis of the present industrial society is the unsatiable urge for hoarding money and the selfish motive. In it lies the biggest anomaly of the Western society which claims to be truly Christian. Probably this very aspect of Western society was in the mind of Mahatma Gandhi when he denounced that society by calling it the "devil's civilisation".

The dreadful capability of this civilisation to make the people mentally prisoners has been distinctly painted in George Orwell's counter-Utopian novel, *Nineteen Eightyfour*. Though the background of the novel is the author's first-hand experience of Communist functioning during the civil war in Spain and the knowledge of Russia under Stalin, the picture painted in *Nineteen Eightyfour* is a befitting description of any modern society. The only difference is that today's big concerns are better equipped with the invisible and scientific technology to control the minds of people than those imagined by Orwell in his novel and thus now there is no need to apply the cruel methods of Stalin and Hitler as in the past or those of the dictators of the Third World at present. The German youths who are opposing the present set-up in their country live in constant fear that the government might prepare a record of their activities with the help of computers and all that happens in a society which is democratic through and through, and encourages the market system of economy! Violating the secrecy of personal life influencing the people's choice and their way of thinking through the advertisement industry is not the attribute of dictatorial rule but the inherent merit of the present industrial system

In short, it can be said that with the collapse of the USSR and the developments in Eastern Europe the very experiment of Marxist Utopianism, which sought to rescue the world from the problems resulting from the Industrial Revolution has ended. But still the solution to the current problems of the present industrial society is nowhere in sight. In Eastern Europe and the USSR, poverty and shortages of goods have further complicated the problems. Besides the problem of mental bondage, there are other grave problems too like the problem of environmental pollution on a large scale, the severe exploitation of natural resources and the danger of their extinction. For these problems the market economy and consumer culture are solely responsible. The new set-ups which are evolving in the USSR and Eastern Europe are also not going to provide solution to these pressing problems of the human world These can be only solved by bringing an overall change in the very outlook of man, his vision of development and aims of life

Undoubtedly, Marxist Utopianism has failed in Russia but still it is relevant in many parts of the world because there remains something important in it In the initial phase of the industrial civilisation some of the prosperous capitalist countries ended exploitation and reached a stage where it became possible for them to provide an easygoing life to large segments of their populations But here it is to be noted that their prosperity came at the cost of exploitation of three-fourths of the world population In these countries exploitation is still going on unabated in the same fashion which once characterised the exploitation of Europe and attracted its people towards the Utopian concept of Marx. For the poor people of these countries Utopianism is still relevant which leads them only to a dark future. Political parties like the CPI-M are still not ready to break away from Stalinism because they know it well that in a poor country like India a solid mass-base can be built on the basis of Marxist Utopianism

Nevertheless, the struggles for a just world that Marx had conceived can emerge victorious only by traversing a road beyond the Marxist Utopia ■

COMMUNICATION

Throttling Dissent

The recent ransacking of the office-premises and the murderous assault on some staff-members of a Bengali daily (*Aajkal*) for publishing a letter from a reader regarding the alleged past misdeeds of a godman must be condemned strongly by all who believe that violence and other forms of intimidation have no place in a democracy.

It is unfortunate that the forces which blatantly propagate that they know the ultimate, the undisputed and the unchallengeable knowledge are gradually taking possession of the centre-stage. Sad indeed would be the day when such Khomenisque reaction to eliminate the voice dissent (rather to ensure abject obsequiousness) would be the rule in our society.

K.K Gupta

3B/A, Gagan Sarkar Road
Beliaghata
Calcutta-700010

NIKHIL: India-Pakistan

(Continued from page 4)

years later, it is the same glimmer of hope that I felt as I sensed the feelings of elation at Pakistan's victory in the streets of Calcutta.

Hardheaded politicians will dismiss all this as just a passing sentimental effusion which has no place in the stern realities of confrontational politics in which two neighbours are involved—armed alert on the Line of Control, the JKLF, the Khalistani infiltrator in Punjab and the Hizbul secessionist in Kashmir, the *Hindutva* and the Islamic assertion, and then the nuclear bomb. We have built forbidding walls of hatred between ourselves, and our governments do not hesitate to make an exhibition of this antipathy before the world. We have by mutual consent introduced a visa system by which our citizens have to report to the police every few days as if we are suspected criminals. The visa-holders from distant lands are allowed to move about freely in our two countries, but not the nationals of the two neighbours. We pile up huge arsenals of deadly weapons and frankly declare that our threat perception comes from each other more than from anybody else We make a complaint to distant powers about each other conspiring to have the nuclear bomb, but we do not sit down and talk it over between ourselves.

The partition that divided India was the product of fear and folly, arrogance and insensitivity; for which we can blame our leaders, but that is not going to undo an act of history. To think in terms of undoing that partition is today not only unrealistic but may turn out to be dangerous. What as realists we can do and must do is to boldly bring our two peoples together without hurting the sovereignty of either country. When the entire world is in a state of ferment and convulsion, when mighty totalitarian structures are collapsing without a whimper, and millions upon millions are on the move in search of new moorings, new identities, we, the two largest peoples in this region, the proud inheritors of the same history, have also to think hard and bestir ourselves to bury our arms and abjure our fears, prejudices and misgivings, and respond faithfully and abundantly to the irrepressible urge of our peoples to live in peace and harmony—share our moments of joy and help to mitigate our pangs of sorrow and deprivation.

It is said that when a people wills it, it can move mountains. On every issue that divides our two countries, have we not reached a blind alley? The torments that beset us, haven't we had enough of them? If Kashmir is the stumbling block, isn't it time to think of new ways of looking at it? The mess that we have both made in our respective parts of this paradise on earth, should make us hang our heads in shame. We have spilled blood in plenty, we have squandered crores and we both have lost the trust of the people of that picturesque Valley. Isn't it time that we acknowledged our bankruptcy and sought new ways of bringing peace, and listened to the people right there? Can India's sovereignty be asserted only by the gun? And can Pakistan's glory be enhanced by ceaselessly stoking a low-intensity war which can never be won?

There is abundant fund of goodwill and far-seeing wisdom in our two peoples to work out new designs of enduring amity. And out of that shall emerge the true confederation of heart and head of the two independent countries, the neighbours that bear the stamp of a great heritage of History's richest civilisations. ■

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Nagaland ● Alternative to 'Globalisation'

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POLITICAL NOTEBOOK

In the Land of Ram

The fact-finding team comprising members of Parliament and the National Integration Council has returned to the Capital after a day's trip to Ayodhya Its task was to inspect the site of the disputed Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi complex where demolitions of several temples in recent days have once again brought into sharp focus the Ayodhya problem—and with it the larger issue of communal harmony—on the national plane Several members of the team categorically stated that they were "neither satisfied nor convinced" with the UP Government's explanation on the demolitions The leader of the delegation, S R Bommai, conveyed the same opinion by stating that the "UP Government could not satisfactorily explain or answer queries of the team members"

It was quite expected of the UP Government to present its version of the demolitions which boils down to the assertion that the steps taken on that score did not violate the court orders. And that is precisely what the two members of the BJP Ministry in UP conveyed with characteristic emphasis. However, they did not place before the team either the relevant court orders including stay orders by the Supreme Court and the Allahabad High Court Nor did they present the site plan they want to develop as the Ram Katha Park The delegation has asked the State Government to furnish those details at the earliest

Reports by informed journalists on the team's visit provide an insight into the BJP-VHP's command performance during the trip As one report in a Delhi daily by a correspondent closely following the latest events at Ayodhya disclosed, till April 6 the security arrangements at the complex had threatened to surpass those of the former UP Government during the *kar seva* of October 1990; but on April 7, when the team visited the spot, those arrangements simply vanished into thin air

> At the site itself, no non-member, including presspersons and VHP and BJP activists who had been issued special passes, was checked by the police. Going a step further, the VHP let loose hordes of its supporters inside, giving the place the ambience of a picnic rather than a serious fact-finding mission, which it was intended to be
> (Radhika Ramaseshan in *The Pioneer*, April 8, 1992)

And this by a State Government whose Chief Minister has openly confessed in the State Assembly that the UP administration had spent Rs 26 lakhs on security arrangements for the BJP chief in 16 districts of the State during the much-trumpeted *ekta yatra* before it turned out to be a damp squib!

It was also pointed out how aides of the Faizabad MP belonging to the BJP, former wrestlers themselves, had ousted the *mahants* and priests at the so-called Ram Janmabhoomi temple thereby forcing the *mahants* to lament over the marginalisation of the religious leaders by the VHP elements

These are all of immense significance So also is the point that the entire land around the temple having been levelled, no clue or trace remained of the original shrines and structures, although former Chief Minister N D Tiwari was quick to notice the sea-change that had been brought about within a brief time-span

On the whole, the team's visit, though belated, has not been in vain The slogans raised against Syed Shahabuddin and the State Government's opposition to some

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members visiting the mosque in Fatehganj that had been rocked by a bomb blast eight days ago only exposed the BJP-VHP's guilt complex, if not their obvious intention to further communalise the issue. The BJP delegation's visit to the complex after the tour of the fact-fiding mission (which the party had refused to join for obvious political reasons) has also to be seen in the same light

The Centre as well as the secular forces in different parties have to move with utmost caution so as not to allow the communal elements to exploit the situation to their advantage. But there is no alternative to the exercise of strict vigilance. It is in that context that the demolitions have to be viewed. While taking every care not to fall into the booby trap laid by the protagonists of the *Hindutva* theory the Union Government must take firm measures against any move capable of not only shattering communal harmony but also placing our entire secular cultural ethos in jeopardy.

A resolution of the seemingly intractable problem is possible only if the standard bearers of Hindu communalism retract from their rigid postures and desist from attempting to demolish the Babri mosque in the name of Ram. They must be made to realise that such an attempt would be a tribute to neither Ram nor Hinduism.

April 8 *S.C.*

NAGALAND

The Sordid Game

HARISH CHANDOLA

The tiny State of Nagaland rattled the mighty Centre twice in the past week.

First, on March 27, when the Governor, M.M. Thomas, dissolved the State Assembly upon the advice of the Chief Minister, Vamuzo, after it had been in existence for three years only, and appointed Vamuzo as the caretaker Chief Minister without the Centre's consent.

Then, on April 3, when the Centre took over the administration of the State by imposing President's Rule under Article 365 of the Constitution without, and possibly against, the recommendation of the Governor, and dismissed the caretaker government of Vamuzo.

After the adoption of the budget on March 27, it became apparent that the Vamuzo Government was going to go because of defections from his ruling Naga People's Council (NPC). The Chief Minister alleged that the Congress leadership at the Centre was engineering defections to bring its own party into power in that State.

That defections were going to take place was confirmed by Vamuzo on April 2 when he dismissed seven of his Ministers. This was a day before he himself was to meet the same fate at the hands of the Centre.

On March 27, the leader of the Opposition, S.C. Jamir of the Congress party, flew to Delhi with a list of 11 members of the NPC who had decided to leave the party and join the Congress to enable it to form the government. He had hardly reached his destination when he heard that the Governor had dismissed the Assembly, ending that possibility.

◆

THE game of totally unprincipled politics had been honed to absolute perfection by Nagaland. By playing it, the State on March 27 had presented a legal and constitutional crisis never before experienced by the country.

The game is not a Nagaland innovation. It was started and played by *Ayarams* and *Gayarams* in Haryana and elsewhere before.

In Nagaland, they call it "a game of numbers", avoiding the words *Ayaram* and *Gayaram*, which the people there think are Indian

The beginning of this game in Nagaland goes far back. But let us look at its latest round, in which the Chief Minister there, Vamuzo, defeated the Congress party and the Central Government in one go decisively.

The last round of elections to the 60-member Nagaland Legislative Assembly was held in January 1989. In them, the voters had totally eliminated the independent candidates. They were responsible for shortening the life of previous State Governments by shifting their support from one party to another for gains.

This time, they had elected 36 Congress candidates and 24 of the Nagaland People's Council (NPC).

Hardly a year had gone by, when the Congress party split over fights for leaves and fishes, and 12 of its members announced that they were going to cross over to the NPC.

The magic number of 12 was arrived at in order to prevent the Speaker from disqualifying those leaving the Congress, under the anti-defection law. If one-third members of a party decide to leave it, that is accepted as a split; less than that attracts provisions of the anti-defection law and disqualification. The Congress had 36 members in the Nagaland Assembly and the 12 made up the required one-third for a split.

To forestall that, the Congress expelled two of its

MLAs from the party, reducing the number of those who broke away to 10, which was less than the one-third, and so the Speaker disqualified them from the membership of the House.

In the reduced Assembly of 50, the Congress, left with only 24, became the minority party, and the NPC, with its 24, plus the two coming to it after their explusion from the Congress, the majority.

So, it formed a government under the Chief Ministership of K.L. Chishi.

It was then the turn of the Congress to take up the toppling game. It used Vamuzo, a former Finance Minister and an ambitious man, who had been defeated in the Assembly election by M. Vero, to cause a split in the NPC. It promised him the Chief Ministership and Speakership of the House. And so he with a few of his NPC supporters joined the 24 members of the Congress to form a coalition government. His man, Thinocho, became the Speaker.

Trouble within this uneasy coalition came to the fore a few months later, when the Centre banned the underground organisation, the National Socialist Council of Nagaland, which both sides were wooing. The Congress accused Vamuzo of advising the Centre for the ban, and Vamuzo, the Congress.

The coalition collapsed.

Ten Congress MLAs remained with Vamuzo, and the Speaker, Thinocho, revoked the disqualification of the 10 whom the previous Speaker, T.N. Ngulie, who had joined the Vamuzo Ministry, had disqualified. The NPC thus assumed a strength of 34.

Now it was for Vamuzo to face the threat of defections over the sharing of benefits. The Deputy Chief Minister, K.L. Chishi, and Dr V. Sakhrie formed a group of 12 and split from the NPC.

The new Speaker then used the same trick played by his predecessor a year ago, accepting the expulsion of the two K.L. Chishi and Dr V. Sakhrie, from the NPC, which enabled him to disqualify the other 10, because they did not constitute the one-third needed for recognising a split.

The Assembly was once again reduced to 50 members; 24 belonging to the Congress, 24 to the NPC, with two, K.L. Chishi and Dr V. Sakhrie, unattached. Whichever party obtained their support would become the majority, and both sides claimed them.

The Governor then called a special session of the Assembly for a headcount.

To avoid a defeat, the Speaker, Thinocho, disqualified five Congress members on the ground that they had earlier committed themselves to defect from their party and join the NPC.

Now, it was for the Congress Legislature Party to complain if their members defected and to get them disqualified under the anti-defection law. But it did not do so, and the Speaker, belonging to the NPC, on his own disqualified the five members. The Congress strength was thus reduced to 19.

Meanwhile, the 15 disqualified members went to the Guwahati High Court against the order of the Speaker. The High Court in early March upheld the Speaker's decision. The 15 then appealed to the Supreme Court, which was to give its verdict shortly.

With the 15 MLAs thus remaining disqualified, in the Rajya Sabha elections from the Nagaland Assembly constituency, the NPC candidate, Vizol, was declared successful on March 27, defeating his Congress rival, Asangba Sangtam. The same day the Nagaland Assembly passed its annual budget, with a deficit of over Rs 140 crores.

The budget had hardly been passed when rumours began circulating that 13 NPC members were going to defect. Vamuzo accused the Minister of State for External Affairs, Eduardo Falerio, who had been sent to Kohima to get his party candidate elected to the Rajya Sabha, of threatening the Assembly members with imposition of President's Rule in Nagaland if they did not elect the Congress nominee.

Vamuzo said this created conditions for defections from the NPC.

Before that could happen, Vamuzo advised the Governor, M.M. Thomas, to dissolve the Assembly and instal a caretaker government with himself as the Chief Minister. The Governor accepted his advice, without consulting the Centre.

The constant defections, disqualification of members and the revocation of that disqualification had created a very unstable situation in Nagaland. There was no doubt that the Vamuzo Government would have fallen, either as a result of defections, or because of the possibility of the Supreme Court deciding against the order of the Speaker on the disqualification of the 15 members of the House. If they came back to the Assembly, the Congress would become the majority party, and the Vamuzo Government would be dismissed.

To forestall that possibility, Vamuzo asked the Governor to dissolve the Assembly and set up a caretaker government.

Now, the Governor took the excuse for his decision that on the day Vamuzo gave him the advice, he had the majority in the House. Had he lost the majority, the Governor would have recommended the imposition of President's Rule, under Article 356 of the Constitution.

◆

THE people of Nagaland do not want elections in such quick succession. The State had elections to the Assembly in December 1987. Because of defections, the government fell and there were elections two years later, in January 1989. And now there will be elections for the third time in four years. The people there are tired of them.

Politicians too are not looking forward to them. The constituencies in Nagaland are small, between 5000 and 10,000 voters. But given the state of corruption

(Continued on page 34)

A Historic Transition Unfolds

K. NATWAR SINGH

The author, the former Minister of State for External Affairs, has just returned after a trip to Afghanistan. His article presents the latest scenario in that war-ravaged country.

—Editor

In happier times Afghans, nonchalantly used to declare, "we are at peace with ourselves only when we are at war with each other."

Alas! For thirteen tragic, blood-soaked, brutal years the Afghans have not known a day's peace. One of the monumental blunders the USSR committed was to send its troops into an independent non-aligned country. Worse still, they stayed too long, abused and loathed though they were. I vividly remember Mrs Indira Gandhi telling the, hardly coherent Brezhnev to pull out of Afghanistan. To no avail. I remember President Castro saying to me in Havana in 1988 how the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan had all but wrecked Cuba's Presidency of the non-aligned movement. On the other side, Pakistan and the West used the *mujahideen* as *mercenaries* and brought misery to the Afghan people. Some estimates put the death toll at two million. Tens of thousands of children have been orphaned, young brides widowed. The rehabilitation of millions of Afghans, the rebuilding of the country, the reconstruction of the economy, the resuscitation of a viable political and acceptable instrumentality is a monumental task. At long last the process has begun. The count down in Kabul started at a leisurely pace. Now it is progressing at a breath-taking pace.

◆

I was in Kabul last week as a guest of President Najibullah. I had long conversations with him and my dear friend Foreign Minister Abdul Wakil. I arrived at a most exciting and historic time. Momentous events are unfolding in and around Kabul. It was also a saddening experience. But gloom under any circumstances is a useless emotion. While the past cannot be wished away, the future is far more important.

A very dramatic event occurred in Kabul last month. President Najibullah's statement that he would step down to pave the way for a political settlement sent shock waves in Kabul, Islamabad, Teheran and Washington. The USA and Pakistan had made President Najibullah's removal a pre-condition for discussion on a political settlement. The last USSR soldier left Afghanistan on 15.2.89. The West and Pakistan had been certain that Najib would not last more than a month or two after the Soviet withdrawal. Well, he is still there, thirtyeight months later. India was almost alone in saying that Najib was no light-weight push over and would hold out.

What the *mujahideen* and their powerful backers could not achieve, has been accomplished by Benon Sevan, the UN Secretary-General's energetic and politically astute Special Representative for Afghanistan, through quiet, behind-the-scene diplomacy. Not only did he succeed in persuading Dr Najibullah to issue his self-denying statement, earlier he had also hammered out the five point UN Plan.

The five-points are:

1 The necessity of preserving the sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence and non-aligned and Islamic character of Afghanistan.

2. The recognition of the right of the Afghan people to determine their own form of government and to choose their economic, political and social system free from outside intervention, subversion, coercion or constraint of any kind whatsoever.

3 The need for a transitional period, details of which have to be worked out and agreed upon through an intra-Afghan dialogue, leading to the establishment of a broad-based government

   (a) The need, during that period, for transitional arrangements acceptable to the vast majority of the Afghan people, including the establishment of a credible and impartial transition mechanism with appropriate powers and authority (yet to be specified) that would enjoy the confidence of the Afghan people and provide them with the necessary assurances to participate in free and fair elections, taking into account Afghan traditions for the establishment of a broad-based government.

   (b) The need for cessation of hostilities during the transition period.

   (c) The advisability of assistance, as appropriate, of the United Nations and of any other international organisation during the transition period and in the electoral process.

4. The necessity of an agreement—to be implemented together with all agreed transitional arrangements to end arms supplies to all Afghan sides, by all.

5. The recognition of the need for adequate financial and material resources to alleviate the hardship of the Afghan

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For an Alternative to 'Globalisation'

UPENDRA BAXI

This is a synopsis of the S.M. Joshi Memorial Lecture by the author, Vice-Chancellor, University of Delhi, on "Globalisation: A World Without Alternative?", delivered on April 1, 1992 in New Delhi. —Editor

The formative era in which S.M. Joshi struggled and lived was a time when oneself was proud to be called an Indian: he brought to our "wounded civilisation" many a transformative hope. While the old causes, values and goals which he cherished remain tremendously important today, we all feel that the world has so swiftly and dramatically changed as to deprive our memory of S.M. Joshi and his times of all historic plenitude for the future.

What has caused this disorientation and reorientation towards the world? How is it that many a fighting faith of yesteryear seems to us deeply incoherent or problematic? How is it that we have moved so suddenly from a worship of a plural heterogeneous world to obscene sycophancy of unipolarism? And how is it that the dreams of unipolarism of a solitary superpower threaten to become a nightmare for the world of nations, especially of the Third World? How is it that we can understand the possibility of near-universalisation of earlier forms of McCarthyism, even in the land of Lenin? How is it that our languages, and with these our vision of the world, have changed?

Perhaps, this change, all of it, may be located in the notion of "globalisation" often described as comprising "all those processes by which the people of the world are incorporated in a single world society."

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THE processes of globalisation are not new. But one may distinguish at least three historic processes or stages of "globalisation". The first long phase of "globalisation" accomplished colonial imperialism, over long stretches of time and space throughout the world. The contemporary second phase of "globalisation" is marked by international efflorescence of concern for human rights and standards of international justice which will chasten the arrogance of sovereign power everywhere. The third phase of "globalisation", running concurrent with the second, has been marked by a steady rise of forces of late capitalism, so actively foreseen by Karl Marx in *Grundrisse*, manifesting multinational hegemony and the dominance of international financial institutions both emerging as suprastatal centres of authority.

The second phase of "globalisation" was indeed dramatically different from the colonial/imperial phase. In the halcyon of decolonisation and self-determination of most peoples of the Third World and the emergence of the United Nations system as a prime weapon of the weak, "globalisation" signified a new vision of the human future. This vision was concretised steadily in the sixties and seventies by epochal enunciations of human rights. Thus, "globalisation" in the second phase signified the articulation of a new culture and ethics of power, both nationally and internationally.

Since the inaugural Universal Declaration of Human Rights, developments in recognition of individual human beings against and over state power are, indeed, remarkable. Not merely do they protect and promote basic human rights, categorised as civic, political, economic and cultural rights of individual human beings but we see a steady expansion of conferment of basic human rights to specific human collectivities or groups such as women, indigenous peoples, racially discriminated, physically disabled, mentally ill and dispossessed peoples, migrants and, most recently, children. Equally remarkable are articulations of rights to self-determination, economic and cultural rights of individual human beings, right against apartheid, right to environment, immunity from genocide, right to peace and the most recent declaration of the right to development of people and states. These enunciations truly mark the advent of a new culture of collective democratic rights of people.

The new culture of globalism also saw that human rights were not directed only against state power; increasingly, they were addressed to formations of civil society, wielding power over people. The little known UN Declaration of 1975 concerning Scientific and Technological Progress in the Interest of Peace and for the Benefit of Mankind urges states to so deploy science and technology or to avoid "flagrant violations of the Charter of the United Nations" and eliminate "inadmissible distortion of the purposes that should guide technological developments for the benefit of mankind". Similar in spirit are the Tokyo Declaration of 1971 addressed to the medical profession in dealing with situations of torture, cruel, degrading and inhuman treatment, and the 1982 General Assembly Proclamation of the Code of Medical Ethics, the UN Committee on Crime Prevention, code of conduct for law enforcement officials, lawyers and judges, the 1986 Ottawa Declaration on Health for All, and the movement for a new international information order. All these measures address and involve autonomous professional groups as bearers of basic duties to the peoples of each nation and of the world.

As if this was not enough, the culture of globalisation addressed itself to the task of enuntiating visions of social progress, imbued with standards of international justice in relations and among states, for example, the 1969 UN Declaration on Social Progress and Development in addition to enshrining and enriching the principles of Panchshilla (termed in international law literature as the Nehru Doctrine) proclaimed the duty for developed countries to provide for "greater assistance on better terms", requiring specific dedication of one per cent of the GNP as minimal "aid volume target" as well as "the general easing of terms of lending to the developing countries through low-interest on loans and long grace periods for the repayment of loans" and the assurance that the allocation of such loans will be based on "strictly socio-economic criteria, free of any political considerations."

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WE understood, till recently, by globalisation a realisation of the culture of "globalism". In the spirit of globalism in the mid-eighties globalisation appeared as a description of

> those values which take the real world of five billion people as an object of concern, the whole earth as the physical environment, everyone living as the world citizens, consumers and producers, and with a common interest in collective action to solve global problems.[1]

"Globalism" seems to be thus

> a very concrete universalism, moved by the actual sight of starving children in Ethopia or by the data on malnutrition in Bangladesh.[2]

But "globalism" in this sense has received a massive setback ever since the incoherence of American economy, with billions of dollars deficit, has come to full view. The humane languages of globalism stand eroded by languages of Super-301, structural adjustment programmes (cruelly emerging in an acronym as SAP), trade retaliation, debt problem; gone are the languages of the New International Economic Order, Sustainable Development, Right to Development so prominent in collective United Nations enunciations.

The passage from "globalism" to "globalisation" is marked by discursive practices where collective interdependence becomes collective dependence of South on North; where consumption needs of industrialised societies begin to enjoy ontological priority over the minimum basic needs of the wretched of the earth in the Third World; where resilient-market: friendly liberal ideologies provide the dominant visions of human futures on the eve of the twentyfirst century.

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THE present phase of globalisation is characterised by three features. The first is the erasure of the discourse on globalism; second, the emergence of new terms of discourse; third, the transformation of our vision of the world and of our common future.

As to the first, it seems that the entire UN discourse on human development stands obliterated by the current cacophony on globalisation. The fact that the UN's Declaration on Social Progress—calling for expansion of international trade "based on principle of equality and non-discrimination and the rectification of the position of the developing countries in international trade by equitable terms of trade..."—should be lawlessly forgotten by international financial institutions is perhaps understandable. But the amnesia of the leaders of the South providing critical leverage for negotiations is unpardonable.

The amnesia of the leaders of the South of the rich heritage of the UN standards for international justice and equality is unpardonable. It was the UN and the leaders of the South, who contributed so marvellously to the emergence of these enunciations. What has changed about the world so recently that we are made to feel obsolete when we approach these standards of the international rights justice today?

In the same vein, the entire Indian constitutional discourse and its languages of social justice are suddenly made to seem totally irrelevant to a vision of a future India and I would not be surprised if very soon we hear powerful pleas to rewrite our Constitution with a view to legitimise new practices of power oriented to achieving of globalisation. But the Indian Constitution was an heir to the tradition of a whole new culture of globalism, which is civilisationally precious.

Second, "globalisation" processes bring us to the threshold of a new political and civic culture, indeed to a point of basic transformation in the languages of politics. The soft evocative languages of Indian politics which invoked symbols of "socialism", "secularism", "social justice", "human rights" have all but disappeared in a matter of months, to be replaced by hard languages of economic/technocratic management of power relations and structures. India continues to be in peril. The threat emanates not from alternate visions of India and of the world, but from fiscal "deficit", adverse balance of payment, deregulation, privatisation, wasteful and inefficient management and, above all, empty state coffers. Key decision-makers tell us to look at hard and harsh realities which no longer allow us to recourse to soft ideological options and posturings. The recovery of India for Indians depends on sound management and restructuring of Indian economy, hopefully in globally competitive terms.

At this rate, political discourse in India will soon become almost wholly an economic and economist discourse, excluding from its domain even those practitioners of politics who do not grasp the niceties of fiscal, monetary, development and international economics languages. The privileging of these languages undoubtedly ushers in a new mode of exclusionary practices of knowledge and power. The distance we

(Continued on page 35)

Jharkhand Movement at Crossroads

AMAL CHANDRA KUMAR

The more than half a century old Jharkhand movement has not only acquired the dubious distinction of being one of the oldest movements in the country but also stands at the crossroads today. Jharkhand, the land of forests, has time and again given rise to various social and political groups, championing the cause of the local people against exploitation by the outsiders. The present movement of the tribals of the south-central part of the country for a separate State of Jharkhand is in many ways a continuation and extension of their heroic tradition of struggle against British imperialism and local feudalism. It is basically a protest movement against the exploitation of the indigenous tribal people by the outsider *dikus*. To quote the election manifesto of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) in 1980, "we want Jharkhand free from exploitation, a Jharkhand where those who work will eat and those who loot will go". But today the Jharkhand movement has assumed the same position with which it was initiated in 1983 with the formation of the Adivasi Mahasabha. Today the movement is struggling hard to maintain its distinct ideology and organisational identity. It is, therefore, the right time to examine the mechanisms and processes by which the ethnic consciousness of the tribals and the militancy of the movement have been to a large extent successfully neutralised.

Interestingly enough, today Jharkhand means different things to different people depending on their specific needs. To the rural people, Jharkhand means restoration of their rights over lands and forests and an end to the exploitation by the *mahajans*. For the unemployed, Jharkhand represents a dreamland where only locals will get jobs.

The Jharkhand movement has faced several ups and downs in its life. In the year of 1949 at a conference of the Adivasi Mahasabha held in Ranchi, the Jharkhand Party was formed and Jaipal Singh was elected its President. He gained popularity by demanding a separate Jharkhand State. He declared that Jharkhand was the land of the Adivasis and the non-Adivasis had exploited the Adivasis economically and politically, and there was little hope for their regeneration as long as the intruders remained in Jharkhand. He even advocated violence to oust the intruders and achieve the goal of separate statehood.

In the initial years of the movement the Jharkhand Party showed four distinct traits: (a) thinking and activity of the urban-oriented, (b) dominated by the Christians; (c) predominance of two major tribes of Ranchi, that is, Murdas and Oraons, and (d) sectarian behaviour against the non-tribal population in the name of tribal solidarity. Gradually ethnicity was replaced by regionalism and the militant movement gave rise to an organised political party.

In the first general elections of 1952, the Jharkhand Party fought the election and won 33 Assembly and three Lok Sabha seats from Bihar alone which gave a new impetus to the movement in and outside the Assembly. In the year of 1954, the party demanded a separate State of Jharkhand comprising the districts of Chhotanagpur, Santhal Parganas and parts of Gaya, Sahabad, Bhagalpur and Monghyr districts of Bihar, some parts of Mirzapur district of UP, Surguja district of Madhya Pradesh and the districts of Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj in Orissa. But the demand for a separate State was rejected on the ground of lack of viability of the region as a linguistic unit.

In the general elections of 1962, the Jharkhand Party won only 20 Assembly seats in Bihar. The developmental activities and industrialisation under the first two Five Year Plans in the Chhotanagpur region removed the tribal people temporarily from the agitational path. In 1963, due to the lack of farsightedness of the leaders of this movement, the Jharkhand Party merged with the Congress which proved to be a severe blow to the movement and ushered in an era of confusion in the politics of the Chhotanagpur region. The party leaders soon realised their mistake and started reviving the old party declaring the merger as illegal. But lack of any unified political group of the tribals confused the movement. A number of splinter groups claiming to be the real Jharkhand Party appeared on the scene but none of them could further the cause of the suffering tribals as they were infected by mutual bickerings. The movement regained its strength only after the formation of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM). It not only demanded a separate State, but a State free from class exploitation and decided to recover alienated lands from money-lenders and big peasants in north Chhotanagpur. It also widened its base by embracing the mining and industrial workers. Thus an attempt was made to bring the workers and peasants closer on a common platform.

In 1986, the All Jharkhand Students' Union (AJSU) was formed by the tribal students taking a cue from their counterparts in Assam. Gradually the movement achieved some degree of maturity after the intellectual participation. It has in its ranks today a host of young academics who not only have studied the socio-economic problems of the region in depth but are well equipped to analyse the situation scientifically and argue their case quite logically. The movement thus has come out of its emotional phase and can today boast of a strong intellectual base of its own.

Meanwhile, in the ninth Lok Sabha elections of 1989 and the subsequent Assembly elections of 1990, the JMM won six and 19 seats respectively in Bihar.

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TODAY, the Jharkhand movement is not only a tribal movement, a large number of non-tribals are participating in the movement. This quantitative expansion has led to the qualitative dilution of the movement. The non-tribal entrants are more often contractors, moneylenders and other dubious elements. They are not content with being mere followers, but have become local leaders and on several occasions proved to be more powerful than the prominent tribal leaders. Issues and problems of the tribals, namely, exploitation-discrimination of tribals in every sphere of socio-political life, land alienation, *mahajani* exploitation, sexual exploitation of tribal women, the general looking down upon the tribal way of life, dominance of regional and national languages and culture over those of the tribals, the crisis of cultural identity, etc. have been almost lost sight of by the movement.

Moreover, in the course of its long existence, the Jharkhand movement has slowly been transformed into a movement for the 'development' of tribals much along the same way as that of their non-tribal neighbours which is, according to some experts, the ideological victory of the dominant communities over the tribals within the movement. Whenever the movement became militant the government responded in terms of development. The tribals are being made to increasingly clamour for developmental projects. Today they only talk about the entitlement of tribals to development.

Therefore, from ethnicity via development to regionalism—the movement has travelled a long path in the ideological road towards integration and assimilation with the dominant communities. From being a movement of tribal autonomy and identity it has been transformed into a movement for decentralised administration and for redemarcation of State boundaries. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why the Central Government has recently taken note of the movement.

The Union Home Minister, S.B. Chavan's statement in Parliament in December 1991 has not only helped to focus public attention on the issue once again but also unintentionally stoked the flames of the temporarily dormant Jharkhand movement and further roused the aspirations of the region's people to manage their own affairs in a meaningful way. Responding to a question, the Minister stated that the Centre may not be averse to the formation of a Jharkhand State for tribals if the States concerned—Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh—agreed to such a proposal.

The Home Minister's statement is actually directed towards some other unstated purposes. In the first place, it is seemingly an exercise in passing the buck to the concerned State Governments in order to evade the Centre's responsibility for the non-fulfilment of the Jharkhand demand. Interestingly, all the four States have non-Congress rule. It is also a fact that none of the various ruling parties in the concerned States are inclined to cede their territories of the tribal dominated mineral rich areas to facilitate the formation of a Jharkhand State excluding the Bihar Government which is somehow favourly inclined towards the Jharkhand issue. Only in Bihar, the legislative assembly has passed a bill envisaing the constitution of an Autonomous Council for the Santhal Parganas-Chotanagpur region, no other State has so far taken any initiative to grant some form of autonomy to these tribal populated regions. Till it threw the ball in the court of the concerned States, the Congress at the Centre too has been rejecting the Jharkhand demand.

Once again militancy is in the air. Agitations, bandhs, economic blockade have been the vehicles for demanding either statehood or at least autonomy for the tribal belt. The call for Jharkhand bandh and economic blockade by the militant AJSU from March 1 has upset the whole government machinery of that area. The Centre's suggestion for talks is endorsed by all political parties, the JMM, the AJSU, the JPP, etc. and a call to forget their differences and strive unanimously for their goal is being voiced.

Suraj Mandal, the leader of the JMM, is not ready to accept less than the status of Union Territory for the Chhotanagpur-Santhal Pargana region. The leaders of the JMM and AJSU think that only after that, the region will get developed. The UT will have its distinctive tribal cultural identity.

Today, from local Congressmen to the Marxist-Leninist groups—all agree that one cannot politically survive in this region without identifying with the demand for a separate State. Certainly, a separate Jharkhand State can never be the panacea as it is believed, but undoubtedly its creation will open new vistas for advancing the people's cause. Today the Jharkhand movement stands more for a regional State formation than for ethnic self-determination of the tribal masses. It is concerned more with the question of boundary of the proposed State rather than with the main issues of ethnicity and exploitation. The movement is once again facing a great dilemma because of its internal contradictions. ■

Face of US Offensive

KEWAL VARMA

The referendum in South Africa marks the end of one kind of imperialism and the beginning of another. Most of us in the newly-independent states had earlier thought that the end of imperialism would be marked by democratisation of the world order. The United Nations General Assembly also reinforced these hopes for some years. But today history seems to be playing a cruel joke; our hopes of a more equitable world order are being dashed. The emergence of a unipolar world portends a global order that is more inequitous than what we have been used to since 1947.

The US has been trying, directly and through the international institutions, to impose unfair terms on the developing countries, India included. This is in many ways reminiscent of the treaties which imperialism imposed in the eighteenth century. Since India was a direct colony the unequal terms were all-embracing. But in the case of semi-colonised countries like Japan, China and Egypt the treaties ensured free access to their markets, extra-territorial judicial rights and veto on their defence capabilities.

Today India is being singled out by the US in its bid to impose its own world order because New Delhi has been most active in the movement that sought to consolidate the autonomy of the developing countries. Thus a rather unfair treaty on a strategic issue like nuclear capabilities is being imposed on India. Washongton is forcing it to surrender the nuclear option by coercing New Delhi to sign the non-proliferation treaty when Pakistan, Tibet and Central Asia have nuclear weapons.

According to a position paper of the Pentagon which has been blessed by President George Bush, this treaty will put an end to the "hegemonic aspirations" of India. Suppressing India's nuclear capabilities will send the right signals to deter Germany and Japan from acquiring nuclear weapons. This will then ensure the undisputed supremacy of the US.

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NOT only the US State Department, the IMF and the World Bank are also pressuring India to scale down its conventional defence capabilities. Though this has not been included as one of the conditionalities for their loans to India, the multilateral agencies have secured an informal undertaking to this effect from the government. This is being done at a time when Pakistan has announced that it would substantially increase its defence budget and spend more hard currency to acquire sophisticated equipment from abroad. Under the circumstances, India will have to willy-nilly fall back on the US in the event of any threat to its security and integrity.

There is an attempt to attack India on key economic areas as well. For instance, we have been forced to give better treatment to foreign banks. But Indian banks are obliged to lend to priority sectors at lower interest rates, albeit by charging higher interest on loans to non-priority sectors to cover the losses on loans to priority sectors. But since foreign banks will be under no compulsion to lend to these key sectors Indian banks will never be able to compete with them. They will simply be wiped out if free entry is allowed to foreign banks.

Another sector where unfair terms are being imposed is power. Judging by its plant load factor, the centrally-owned National Thermal Power Corporation is one of the most efficient undertakings. It has been crippled because the State Electricity Boards do not pay their dues and the Central Government does nothing about it. The Centre has, however, guaranteed foreign companies a fixed rate of return of 16 per cent. Since foreign companies will import their equipment, the Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited will die a slow death. The BHEL had won 89 per cent of the World Bank sponsored international tenders and had thus attained global standards of efficiency. But in the past one year the BHEL has not received a single order; by next year it will be using only 25 per cent of its boiler capacity and 45 per cent of its turbine capacity. It cannot even enter the export market because the world over power equipment is sold on suppliers' credit, and the BHEL cannot arrange for this credit without government support.

The situation is quite reminiscent of the eighteenth century when the developing Dhaka textile industry was gagged to make way for foreign textiles. The Indian railway was also built on the basis of a guaranteed rate of return which Dadabhai Naoroji labelled as one of the elements of his famous 'drain' theory. Karl Marx believed railroads would lead to the industrialisation of India. That did not happen because the British investors imported even tiny nails at inflated prices. Today, equipment for the power sector is being sought to be imported and the domestic infrastructure for producing these will have to be dismantled.

The Dunkel Draft of the GATT's Uruguay Round of trade negotiations and its clauses on patents is another unfair term that is being imposed on India. The frequent threats by the US trade representative, Ms Carla Hills, to use Special 301 against India is the crudest form of arms-twisting that the country has been subjected to since independence.

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INDIA is facing this multi-pronged offensive sponsored by the US when the domestic situation could not be any worse. The change in the balance of global power also does not favour us. Our economic survival at the current rate of aggregate consumption depends heavily on foreign assistance. And the nation is just not prepared to bring down its level of consumption for a better future.

The Budget also indicates that this government has shied away from curbing consumption. Chandra Shekhar, who has been making the maximum amount of noise against the sellout to the IMF-World Bank, was asked recently what he would have done had he been in power. With an air of bravado the former Prime Minister replied: "I would have gone to Doordarshan and asked people to bear with me and sacrifice for the country." Perhaps anticipating that people gave him only five Lok Sabha seats in the last elections.

People are in such an apathetic mood that a call to nationalism from any quarter does not evoke much of a response. The BJP tried in its own way through the *ekta yatra,* but did not meet with success. What is stranger is the arugment among increasing sections of the intelligentsia that the IMF and the World Bank are within their rights to impose conditionalities. What they do not realise is that the IMF and the World Bank are not commercial bankers, and their conditionalities go much beyond ensuring repayment of loans. The conditionalities seek to promote a particular kind of socio-economic order which the US is trying to impose.

But how to respond to the new international and domestic reality? In the eighteenth century, countries like China and Egypt succumbed to provocation and challenged imperialism prematurely. They had to pay a heavy price. India too met with a similar fate when it challenged British rule in 1857 without being adequately prepared. Only Japan responded in a cool and calculated manner. It first consolidated its inherent strength and by 1906 it was in a position to effectively challenge colonial authority and dismiss the unfair treaties that had been imposed on it. India, China and Egypt took roughly half a century longer to get out of the clutches of colonialism.

The present situation also calls for cool, calculated and skilful handling. We may have to swallow the unfair terms and conditions being imposed on us. But with vision we can strengthen our position and assert our status in the global arena. At the same time we must do everything possible to ensure that the national pride is not badly wounded. Even if nationalism fails to move the people at present, it has not lost its relevance. But do we have the leadership that can face up to the complexity of the present situation? ■

(Courtesy: *The Telegraph*)

New Directions for India's Foreign Policy

ERIC GONSALVES

Political systems have evolved more in the twentieth century than ever before in recorded history. Hereditary sovereigns and empires have had to make way for nation-states. The last few years have seen a radical restructuring even of this world power structure. This makes it necessary to examine new realities in depth in order to chart a course for the future for India's foreign policy and to restore the broad consensus on which it has always been based.

It is understandable that the fundamental changes required from earlier mindsets have caused some knee-jerk objections. These are sought to be justified on the grounds of "consistency" or "principle". It should, however, be remembered that the acid test of any policy is that it serves the national interest in the world in which we have to live.

The first new dimension is the end of the Cold War. Although this should be welcomed unreservedly by every supporter of non-alignment, the fact is that most Third World countries, including India, did use Cold War leverage in dealing with their bilateral problems. These opportunities have disappeared. It is equally true that partners in the single remaining alliance will also find themselves dealing with a more unpredictable and unrestrained superpower. With total alignment or non-alignment becoming obsolete, shifting alignments on issues are likely to characterise the future scenario. All nations have to adjust their attitudes. If the non-aligned movement is to survive at all, it must hark back to its original purpose of working for a tension-free international environment in which all nations have their place in the sun. To do this in the post-Cold War scenario, it will have to become universal and coterminous with the United Nations or disappear.

The second dimension is that relationships will be determined by power equations with greater economic than politico-military content. This means on the one hand, more cold-blooded North-South attitudes, with the South more marginalised; and on the other hand, having little choice but to integrate with the global economy.

The author, a reputed Indian diplomat who has now retired, was India's Ambassador in Brussels and as the former Secretary of the External Affairs Ministry led the Indian delegation to the Sino-Indian border talks. He was also Director of the India International Centre, New Delhi till recently.

Following the Gulf war, concern is being expressed about the world being managed by global policemen. This is likely but not in the expected guise. The Northern group of countries which has been loosely labelled as the "Vladivostok to Vancouver Group" is now in overall control of most international organisations and is the primary source of resources, technology and markets. This leverage will be utilised to seek to reduce both external and internal tensions by pressure for disarmanent, reduced defence spending, confidence-building and good governance. The consensus statement at the recent Security Council outlines the broad approach, and case studies of Iraq and Yugoslavia indicate its operation on the ground.

India's attitude to these developments cannot be negative. Peaceful resolution of disputes, coexistence, confidence-building, peace-making and peace-keeping, priority for development over armament, universality of democratic societies have all had the highest priority on her agenda, and this will continue in the future. They hold the promise of a better world. However, we do have a duty to our non-aligned conscience and our position as a major and responsible regional power, to ensure that unreasonable Northern solutions are not imposed on the rest of the world.

The third dimension is that the relative marginalisation imposed on develolping countries by the post-Cold War scenario can only be countered by more effective regional cooperation. Even the rich are building up regional blocs.

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SOUTH Asia needs to hasten to put substance into the SAARC. Not only should it move from those peripheral issues that unanimity has permitted it to consider to effective economic cooperation. Given the asymmetry between the size of the various members, the larger ones will have to provide some concessions—India most of all. The organisation must also find a way to consider political and security matters. This can be done informally at first until confidence is established.

Confidence-building in South Asia has to deal with several difficult issues between India and her neighbours. Ironically, with Nepal and Bangladesh one major issue is utilisation of the waters of common rivers, whereas this has been settled with Pakistan. Ethnic tensions and migration are another common problem. India and Pakistan were able to set most of this behind them after the mass transfer of population following partition. But the tension between India and Pakistan continues and although outright conflict has been avoided since 1971, it does escalate regularly to dangerous levels. The public in both countries appears to be unwilling to support an outright military conflict. In recent days there is evidence of disenchantment in Pakistan even with the low-intensity support to dissidents in India. The resource crunch on both sides has also brought about considerable rethinking. In a rational discussion, the security threats are being recognised as less and less real. How then do we set about building the necessary bridges, removing the very real distrust first, and disarming or marginalising the vested interests? To those who have participated in the Indo-Pak dialogue, the immensity of the hurdles is clear. But there is no alternative and some optimism may be discerned in the increasing participation in this dialogue. Moreover, might it not be better to make our own agenda before the aid consortium begins to make it for us?

The US-USSR dialogue over the last twenty years is instructive. Private and quasi-official discussions without publicity were used to lay the groundwork. Mutually balanced force reduction was the basis of agreement. Implementation was based in verification. For India and Pakistan the agenda must now include both conventional and nuclear weapons.

Kashmir is also a matter that we have to settle under the Simla Agreement. State interventions by both India and Pakistan have made the situation in the Valley more and more difficult to manage. To stand pat on old positions in the light of developments in neighbouring Central Asia could move both of us in the direction of becoming irrelevant. Attempts in the direction of a joint determination of the future by the political elements in the Valley together with India and Pakistan after attaining a degree of tranquillity seems to offer the only viable way to proceed.

Any stable arrangements between India and Pakistan require a broad consensus in the two countries. This is impossible as long as elements in either country seek to use Indo-Pak issues for domestic advantage. The suicidal nature of this attitude in the current situation needs to be appreciated—an uphill but necessary task to be undertaken by the genuine statesmen and intellectuals in the leadership. It is equally important to appreciate that any effective dialogue must cover all elements who exercise power—generals, bureaucrats and politicians regardless of protocol.

What it s in common among the problems between India and all her neighbours is that they have been resolved when there has been a will to compromise. They have become intractable when the two sides have sought to obtain their maximum demands. If all can revise their approach, the river waters problem in the east will become more amenable to solution. As with the Indus Waters Agreement and other riverine disputes we should not rule out the services of an interlocutor.

Sri Lanka has still to find its own solution to giving its Tamil minority adequate political autonomy within an unitary polity. It is, however, suggested that much greater economic and cultural cooperation, particularly between South India and Sri Lanka, might provide a better environment for Sri Lanka's necessary political efforts.

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A new factor is that for the first time in 40 years our unique neighbour China is in the throes of some uncertainty about her domestic evolution and her position in the international firmament. She has now accepted her developing country status and is looking for resources, technology and markets like the rest. The end of the Cold War and Tiananmen have also served to isolate China and place her on the defensive. India's willingness to continue to improve bilateral relations and to stand by its commitments in the 1954 Treaty regarding Tibet must, therefore, be welcome to the Chinese leadership. Enhancement of the bilateral relationship will continue. It must expand into all spheres including dialogue between the military establishments and on nucleair questions. we can now assume Chinese disinterest in direct involvement in subcontinental problems as shown by the current attitude on Kashmir.

The boundary question remains to be settled. But both the governments seem prepared for some further delay. Perhaps the lessons of Europe will be appreciated by Asians in due course. If Germans and Poles in 1990 can voluntarily accept borders imposed on them by the victorious powers in 1945, it should be possible for the status quo maintained in our neighbourhood for 30 or 40 years to be accepted as final frontiers with some adjustments.

A settlement providing for adequate autonomy in Tibet will also be necessary if the border is to remain tranquil.

Another reality is the steady economic progress made by all parts of Asia and their growing incorporation into the global economy. Once there was Japan, then the four tigers. Now the ASEAN, Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea and even South-East China have ceased to be poor countries. India has all but ignored this development. However, many of them are showing renewed interest in India. In some ways Taiwan and Korea are more effective partners for our current industrial development than Japan, Germany and America. We need to undertake much greater efforts to relate to these countries and also to Australia. All the Asian sub-regional groupings must be made active partners with the SAARC to resolve together trans-border problems of the future such as environment, fisheries zones, sea lanes, etc.

Japan is now both an economic and technological superpower. But as she has as yet drawn up no unique political agenda, she takes no direct initiatives. Nor does she want to raise the level of hostility already directed against her from the United States on economic grounds. Beyond the existing relationship to take over where the NIEs have ceased to be competitive in the Japanese market offers further attractive opening.

A major new factor is the collapse of the Soviet Union. Even if the CIS becomes an effective entity, which is rather uncertain, the world will have to deal with a number of successor states whose territory and jurisdiction cannot be taken as final for some time. In the mid-term and long-term both the new republics and the rest of the world are searching for the most advantageous new matrix of relationship that they can ensure. The Slavic republics seem more interested in a Western linkage. The trans-Caucausian republics are rent with internal strife. The Central Asians are inevitably influenced by their Russian mentors and their own inclination towards the West. But their need for more broadbased domestic political support makes them also turn to Turkey for ethnic reasons, the Pacific rim for economic reasons, and to Iran and Saudi Arabia for Islamic reasons. Pakistan has instinctively sought to use the religious bond to build up a new economic and political constituency. However, although the present elites need to strike some Islamic postures, they would also regard fundamentalism as a very serious threat. Any attempt to embroil them in outside quarrels would probably be counter-productive. India has had an ongoing relationship with this region since time immemorial. We also had a good relationship during the Soviet period. We need to build on that foundation stressing that what we want is an overall constructive relationship that includes South Asia, Afghanistan and Central Asia, and indeed which excludes none. Our experience in building up a democratic political system and in opening up a controlled economy would be more useful and relevant for their future planning than that of almost anyone else.

This could also be true for Russia and Ukraine. However, for the present Russia seems to be looking mainly Westward. Ukraine has shown more friendly attitudes. Our major concerns should not be just the legacy of the Indo-Soviet relationship. Certain problems have to be assessed. Can we continue to obtain the necessary defence supplies till we diversify our sources? Can we continue the trade exchanges in the new circumstances? There is clearly obvious benefit to economies short of foreign exchange to continue a barter system until they can substitute more normal exchanges. One could even consider gambling some further credits if the barter arrangements are secure. But still we must preserve and work hard with each republic separately looking more at the future than the past.

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THE remaining constant factor is the USA, almost the only remaining superpower. Most of its allies and antagonists have been adroitly brought together in the UN and elsewhere to deal with questions of conflict resolution. Somewhat disconcertingly for some in India, we find ourselves working quite often along with this establishment. However, as explained above, this is inevitable in a post-Cold War situation where alliance linkages do not distort attitudes, and stability is viewed in regional and geographic terms. Revisions in the US attitude on subcontinental questions taking a much more balanced view between India and Pakistan are sufficiently evident. One should also anticipate the increased pressures to reduce tensions and conflicts and for the US to directly intervene in confidence-building exercises as an "honest broker". The US determination to obtain its ends in any bilateral economic relationship by pressure tactics will probably increase unless restructuring of its economy is undertaken—which is unlikely. However, rather than invoking principles our interests may be served by negotiating for the best deal we can get. The American market will be one of the most valuable and it can provide many quid pro quo that we need.

A factor with growing importance is the Europe of 1992. This will become the single largest economic entity in the world and India's largest economic partner. South Asia is the most logical complementary partner in the developing world. As integration takes place, there will be shifts in power and authority from France and Britain to Germany and the Central and Northern Europeans. We need to be prepared for and even to exploit this new situation. Germany has shown considerable goodwill. It is necessary to build concretely on the present united foundations.

A sad fact that has to be faced is the weakness of our economic thrust abroad. There is too great an obsession with multilateral institutions and issues to the detriment of what is most important, namely, promoting the export of goods and services and bringing in technology collaboration and investment. Multilateral agreements and resolutions have their uses. But nothing can substitute for markets that are lost or not exploited. In addition to this necessary revision of priorities, it must also be borne in mind that without a strong growing and competitive economy at home, no country can survive in the international marketplace.

Yet another new factor is that the climate for global disarmament is becoming more stringent. Already one may assume that large cuts will be made in the US and CIS forces. Britain, China and France have refused to join in this exercise. But pressure, at least in the democracies, to abandon weapons of mass destruction will mount. The nuclear weapon powers are clear that the trend should be towards less, not more, weapons and weapons states. All non-signatories are under pressure to sign the NPT and almost all have succumbed. India has been correct in advocating a comprehensive global nuclear disarmament as the best option. We cannot, however, stand still and merely reiterate that stand. Rather, we should take the initiative to say that the distinction made in the NPT has become obsolete and that all powers should gradually become equally subject to the same regime. France and Britain should be able to give up their weapons immediately. The Chinese may require some assurances from the Russians and the Americans. With some changes, the proposals made by Rajiv Gandhi at the special UNGA session on disarmament are worth pressing.

An encouraging factor is that the United Nations is at last able to undertake the role envisaged for it in 1945. It must be helped to do so by making its decision-making more democratic and also more effective. The Security Council needs to become more representative and more responsive to the General Assembly debates. By convention, the veto need never be used. For operational decisions even in peace-making and peace-keeping, delegation to the Secretary-General and the Secretariat will be necessary. The Military Chiefs of Staff Committee needs to become operational. North-South questions, environment and all other global issues should now be dealt with at the UN and it should become capable of doing so to the satisfaction of its members.

If the big powers are agreeable not to dominate the UN, the smaller powers should also not seek recourse to the tyranny of the majority and should act with responsibility. Often, like others, India has supported resolutions not because of conviction, but because they were sponsored by the Arab group or the African group or G-77 or the NAM, etc. We have just corrected another similar stand on not having diplomatic relations with Israel without the many adverse results that were predicted. How to make the UN more effective is being debated around the globe. With our depth of experience, India should be actively associated with this process. The key to a successful conclusion is that members must concede some sovereignty to the organisation and the more powerful must accept more democratic decision-making.

The last reality is that ideology is not dead. Democracy is now the ruling political system in most countries and bids eventually to become universal, as it provides the most effective form of representing the individual and his aspirations. Group pressures may allow fundamentalists of different kinds to hijack a democratic system for some time. It is a matter of satisfaction that despite many difficulties and vicissitudes, India has nurtured this system since independence. We must strive to make it universal. This was Nehru's vision for India and the world.

While looking forward, there are some values from the past that need to be recalled with some urgency—not just in the field of foreign policy, but in almost every aspect of national life. In the last one or two decades there has been a steady erosion of the importance of professionalism and the value given to professional inputs. In dealing with the rest of the world, no nation can afford to rely on instinct or impulse. Jostling self-seekers and sycophants do not provide unbiased and unwelcome but realistic inputs. Hiding behind secret labels can only foster delusion. Overall political direction can and should come from the elected leadership, but only after informed and serious debate, taking into account the expertise and judgement accumulated in the foreign service, the academic community, the media, those in the external economic sector and all those connected with external security. ■

Postures and Realities

ASHWANI MAHAJAN

Amidst far-reaching, sudden and discrete changes, this Budget has brought a buoyant movement in the stock market, a jubiliant mood in the industry as also foreign capital, but the poor are feeling cornered due to their eroding purchasing power as well as fear of loosing their bread itself as a result of reduction in food subsidy in real terms and its abolition altogether on sugar. The middle class' reaction is subdued a little due to the restructured income tax.

In the present Budget the Finance Minister has explained his objectives: his short-term objective is to set right the foreign exchange position and his medium-term objective is sustained economic growth with a higher rate of employment. These are to accompany a strict vigil on inflation. In the following paragraphs an attempt is made to provide an analysis of the legitimacy of such claims by the Finance Minister. An attempt has also been made to look into the charge of the Opposition: it is a 'salesman's budget' in which the Finance Minister has tried to sell the sovereignty of the country.

Improving Foreign Exchange Position: Short- and Long-term Measures

As could be seen from the data which our 'skilled' Finance Minister provided in the Budget, our foreign exchange reserves have increased from Rs 4388 crores to Rs 11,424 crores during the last 12 months. Readers would appreciate that this increase is partially due to the new remittance scheme (Rs 2132 crores) which was another 'Voluntary Disclosure Scheme' (VDS) and partially due to the IMF's loan and its conditionalities which are an open secret now. The Finance Minister himself admits that the industry has suffered heavily due to the cut in imports. Then what is the reason for being so much jubiliant about the improvement in the foreign exchange position?

Now let us come to the long-term measures to bring about fundamental changes in the foreign exchange position. Partial convertibility of the rupee, allowing the NRIs to bring in the yellow metal in order to plug the illegal channels, the Gold Bond Scheme, cuts in imports duties on various items, etc. are some of the drastic steps which our courageous Finance Minister has taken in this regard. Critics blame that the Finance Minister has done nothing more than folowing the World Bank/IMF in further devaluing the rupee by bringing about partial convertibility and drastically cutting down the import duties. How far this would really solve the foreign exchange crisis is a question only the future can answer, especially in view of the fact that the export performance has been dismal despite the earlier devaluation (a fall of about six per cent in the overall exports during the last six months before December). The Gold Bond Scheme is another 'Voluntary Discloesure Scheme'. Is it not pertinent for the honest taxpayer to ask this government: for how long shall we keep on rewarding the dishonest black money holders with one or the other schemes?

The official circles claim that cutting down import duties would make our exports more competitive, as it would go a long way to provide a more fair cost schedule to our export-oriented units. If the past is any guide, this move is not going to record much success. In anticipating export performance, we must understand our realities. The performance of exports in 1990-91 shows that two-thirds of our total exports came from applied agricultural products, cotton textiles and yarn, jute goods, leather goods, readymade garments, handicrafts (including gems and jewellery), and less than 20 per cent came from the modern industries. A significant factor in this is that except in respect of gems and jewellery, the import content of our exports is negligible. How much increase our Finance Minister expects in 20 per cent of our exports? It is a pity that in the last 42 years of our exercise of budgeting, planning and policy-making, we have not understood this reality fully.

It would have been better if our Finance Minister had proposed measures for improving the lot of our traditional exports by trying to realise their problems

The author belongs to the Department of Economics, PGDAV College, University of Delhi.

and making them more presentable to the developed world. Why does our Finance Minister forgets the fact that during the 1980s, the increase in our external debt from $ 20 billion to more than $ 70 billion, as a result of our 'opening up' to the world and liberalisation of our imports, could not set our external balance in order. This has only created huge white elephants in the name of export-oriented units (which export very little) with a high import content. The proposed reduction in duties are seemingly an effort to sustain such industries.

Growth and Employment

The Finance Minister in his usual fashion spoke at length about growth and a higher rate of employment generation as a medium-term objective which he seeks to achieve by keeping inflation at a low rate. Growth has been the major concern of our planners and Finance Ministers, and the modus operandi was the growth of PSUs by setting aside huge funds in our Plans (53 to 54 per cent in each Plan). It was through growth that self-reliance, social justice and modernisation was sought to be achieved. (No doubt some efforts wer also made to attack the problem of poverty directly with hardly any dent on poverty as a whole). Inflation and high rate of growth of unemployment was the price which we paid for a little growth of per capita income (only 1.3 per cent) in the last 42 years. Neither self-reliance nor social justice is in anyway visible in the Indian economy and the modernisation that has been achieved is also a distorted one. How the present Budget seeks to achieve these cherished goals is sought to be examined in the present analysis.

The Finance Minister puts it like this: We start from a deep crisis of foreign exchange. Several short-term measures were required to be adopted to set things in order. Now, he can go on to the path of sustained economic growth after improving the foreign exchange position. What instruments he has in his hands for attaining long-term economic growth? It seems that under the influence of the World Bank/IMF, he does not have much to say about the domestic sector, except for export-led growth via concessions in import duties to make Indian exports more competitive. For domestic industries he has hiked up the excise duties. The domestic organised sector is zooming high for lifting controls on capital issues, freeing mutual funds from income tax and so on. But these peripherel measures would ultimately be beneficial if and only if the industry really shows progress which even the Finance Minister is not very sure about. Even the stock exchange boom can be sustained if the industry really performs as per the rates of equities achieved in the stock market.

Industrial growth depends upon both the demand and supply factors. The automobile industry and many other industries are faced with the problem of recession in demand resulting in less than full capacity utilisation. Increase in excise duties will aggravate their problems even further.

Regarding agriculture the Finance Minister relies heavily on the import of seeds, rice planters, etc. as he proposes the abolition of import duties on seeds and reducing it significantly for rice transplanters. Agricultural equipments produced indigeneously do not attract the Finance Minister's attention. No significant effort has been made to encourage R&D in agriculture. Political compulsions force him to set aside Rs 5000 crores for fertiliser pricing and subsidy including alternatives for restructuring the subsidy. In the meantime the concerned committee has recommended strongly for continuation of fertiliser subsidy for small and marginal farmers and has cautioned against its total abolition. The Committee has further recommended only a gradual reduction in subsidy to maintain the uptrend in agricultural production.

Although the Finance Minister spells out employment as one of the main objectives of medium-term, no new scheme for employment generation except the same old Jawahar Rozgar Yojana has been announced. The Finance Minister was rather busy to make provision for those who are going to face the onslaught of the new policies through massive joblessness. As a result of the ambitious plan of privatisation of the public sector units, thousands are feared to lose their jobs. To avoid opposition of a major kind from the trade unions the Finance Minister has made provisions for them in advance Otherwise there is nothing in the Budget which could generate additional employment of any significant degree—neither the highly mechanised foreign capital which he intends to invite nor the so-called export-oriented units which he intends to establish.

Social Justice

Fear of rising unemployment itself is a big hurdle in achieving social justice. The only consolation is the continuation of food subsidy. But the Finance Minister fails to provide for the buffer stock of sugar. In the absence of subsidy on sugar, the poor consumers are going to be worst hit in the event of any fall in sugar production. (Thank God this year production is expected to be good.)

Inflation

From the time the new government has taken over, inflation has been one of its principal headaches. The controversy over the Congress-I election manifest's claim to roll back prices within 100 days of assuming power and the Finance Minister's rejection of the idea is still in the minds of the Indian people who are keeping their fingers crossed about the ability of the government to control inflation even in 1000 days. Drastic cuts in food subsidy and abolition of sugar subsidy in the current financial year leading to a spurt in the prices of food products fuelled by 'petroleum' price hike has added to the miseries of the public. The Finance Minister's persisting interest in curbing inflation by making provision for food subsidy, revamping the public distribution system, and a significantly low budget deficit are of course worthy of compliments. But efforts to contain inflation are going to receive a setback by a virtual devaluation of the rupee via partial convertibility, increase in excise duties, a drastic cut in the Statutory Liquidity Ratio leading to the additional capacity of banks to create credit and thereby increasing money supply.

Arguments of export competitiveness and convertibility of the rupee cannot work very long. Ultimately these measures must show results if they are to sustain themselves. With the dismal performance of the industrial sector all hopes lie on the agricultural performance (which itself is dependent on the monsoons). Till date exports have not responded to devaluation last year; rather exports recorded a fall of six per cent in the last six months. Let us keep our fingers crossed and wait for the next few months and watch how partial convertibility of the rupee works, how much gold Indians bring home through legal channels and how much gold the Union Government is able to tap through the gold bonds.

A final word. While diverting from the old policy, and going for structural adjustments, the present government should have *opened up* within India and initiated a 'national debate'—instead of *opening up* with the World Bank—on our acceptance of the concept of structural adjustment. ■

Unworkability of 'Trickle-Down' Strategy in India

GIRISH MISHRA

The strategy of trickle-down entered the lexicon of economists before it came to be hotly debated in the context of economic transformation of the newly liberated countries in the 1950s and 1960s. The concept of trickle-down "based on the theory that economic benefits to particular groups will inevitably be passed on to those less well-off" was mentioned for the first time in economic literature by *Antioch Review* (No. 192, Summer 1944), which pleaded for the adoption of its philosophy in all strategies for the development of agriculture and business. Five years later, however, President Harry S. Truman came down upon it with sharp words. As reported by *Baltimore Sun*, he stressed:

> We have rejected the discredited theory that the fortunes of the nation should be in the hands of a privileged few We have abandoned the 'trickle-down' concept of national prosperity.

With the victory of the Republicans in the presidential election, the US Administration resurrected the "discredited theory" of trickle-down and rehabilitated it. The Eisenhowever administration made it permeate the tax programme. With the Cold War rising in its full fury, it came to be hawked by the US-controlled and funded international agencies and research institutes at home and abroad. It was adopted as a convenient device to persuade the newly liberated nations not to work for any restructuring of socio-economic relations at home and a change in the international economic relations. It was devised to win over the vested interests in newly liberated countries which were apprehensive of the ascendancy of "socialistic ideas".

One may look back to find how the trickle-down philosophy came to be praised by the protagonists of status quo in our country. From the Forum of Free Enterprise to the Swatantra Party and the Bharatiya Jana Sangh—all sang songs in its praise. They opposed land reforms, abolition of privy purses, founding of a public sector to provide stimulus to economic development and import substitution. One must not forget that it was the Maharaja of Darbhanga, a big pillar of the Hindu

Mahasabha, the ancestor of the BJP, who had got the Bihar Zamindari Abolition Act declared null and void by court. Prof Balraj Madhok, heading the Jana Sangh, had tried to block the nationalisation of banks in 1969 because it aimed at depriving the big business houses of their control over savings of the people and their use for their narrow interests.

Even though the philosophy of trickle-down has been advertised from time to time with a great deal of fanfare and backing from the World Bank and the US agencies, it has never found favour with our national leadership. As early as 1933-34, Jawaharlal Nehru had rejected the essence of this philosophy and emphasised:

> Nothing is more absurd than to imagine that all interests in the nation can be fitted in without injury to any. At every step some have to be sacrificed for others.

He went on to add:

> We cannot escape having to answer the question, now or later, for the freedom of which class or classes in India are we especially striving for? Do we place the masses, the peasantry and workers first, or some other small class at the head of our list?

Let us give the benefits of freedom to as many groups and classes as possible, but essentially who do we stand for, and when a conflict arises whose side must we take? To say that we shall not answer that question now is itself an answer and taking of sides, for it means that we stand by the existing order, the status quo.

His successor, Indira Gandhi, categorically demanded a change in the existing arrangement of international economic relations while she strived hard to bring about socio-economic restructuring at home. She rejected the trickle-down philosophy when she stated in the course of the second Raul Prebisch lecture:

> When, as a result of the Bretton Woods Conference international institutions were set up, problems were not looked at in their totality nor was the changing world political situation taken into account. These institutions were meant primarily to promote the interests of advanced countries At that time the majroity of today's developing countries were not independent, so that their legitimate interests were unrepresented and internal contradictions inherent in the system soon became apparent. This basic structural flaw distorts the functioning of those institutions. It is not surprising that they have failed at the very first crucial test. What was initially supposed to be advantageous to the developed but not specially helpful to the developing had turned out to be bad for both. Hence the urgency and need for radical restructuring.

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THE trickle-down theory, in fact, sees development as purely an economic phenomenon and ignores the need for restructuring socio-economic relations. The emphasis is mainly on maximising the rate of growth of the GNP which is supposed to lead to percolation of the benefits to the masses in terms of employment opportunities and incomes. To quote Michael P. Todarov:

> The main preoccupation was therefore to get the growth job done while problems of *poverty, unemployment and income distribution* were of secondary importance.

While many countries opted for the trickle-down strategy, India did not fall for it. The Nehru-Mahalanobis model which formed the basis of the Second and Third Plans did address itself to distributional problems. It emphasised the need to lay stress on education, health and land reforms. Mahalanobis was very candid on the question of land redistribution:

> Such redistribution would not necessarily lead to an increase in productivity but it may still be worthwhile because of the social and political benefits which would accrue from it.

The first chapter of the Third Plan, written by Nehru himself, stated:

> The essential problem here is to reduce the spread between the higher and lower incomes and to raise the level of the minimum.

Both Nehru and Mahalanobis and, later Indira Gandhi, did not want de-emphasising of institutional changes. The Nehru-Mahalanobis model rejected the idea that the top ten per cent or for that matter any particular income group should be given primacy in economic development. According to Prof. Sukhamoy Chakravarty:

> There was no necessary presumption that a high income stratum was necessary because it served an importnat role in the accumulation process. The 'bearers' of the accumulation process did not have to belong to a specific, well-defined socio-economic class or stratum.... It was believed that a sharp increase in the size of the public sector financed by initial savings out of taxation would tend over a period of time to socialise a greater proportion of the flow of current incomes through increased production and productivity of the public sector. Along with a steady growth in the productivity of agriculture and in small and village industries, fuller employment at an adequate wage level could be reached, *sooner or later*. Even Mahalanobis's four-sector model, with emphasis at one extreme on heavy industry, whose ownership was to be very largely vested in state hands according to the Industrial Policy Resolution of 1956, and priority at the other extreme on cottage and decentralised sectors with a presumed potential for large-scale labour absorption, was, after all, based on a variant of the same logic.

The strategy of the trickle-down came to be seriously questioned and its appropriateness to the developing countries doubted at the end of the 1960s when, in spite of achieving the UN-prescribed growth targets, a large number of developing countries failed to better the lot of their masses even by a bit. No dent was made into the problems of unemployment and poverty. Consequently, special poverty alleviation programmes came to be formulated. People started talking of direct state intervention and frontal attack on poverty to be integrated with the strategy of economic development.

The protagonists of the trickle-down could shed their mood of despondency and demoralisation when Margaret Thatcher in Britain and Ronald Reagan in the USA assumed power. They tried to minimise the role of state in economic development and de-emphasised the distributional aspect. Top income groups were supposed to be the engine of economic growth and the maximisation of the GNP was accorded the prime importance. Talking of them, a British journal wrote the other day:

> Neither was a great reader of political history, but both governments were saturated with the same economic and political philosophy, culled from old free-market prophets like Adam Smith and new ones like Friedeich Hayek and Milton Friedman.

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NOTWITHSTANDING the trickle-down strategy of economic development, the gap between the rich and the poor in the USA has widened and the incidence of unemployment has increased. To quote a report in the *Economist:*

> Two long-term trends worry Mr and Mrs Average: stagnating real wages, and growing gap between rich and poor. Since the first oil shock in 1973, the real wages of most American workers have stagnated or fallen. And the number of Americans with income classified as "middle class" has declined. According to the Census Bureau, their share of the population fell from 71.2 per cent in 1969 to 63.3 per cent in 1989.

A detailed survey of the movements in national income and wealth distribution since 1977 published only a few days ago by the congressional Budget office shows that though 60 per cent of the increased national income during the Reagan years went to the richest one per cent. There was no percolation of the benefits downwards. The poor became poorer.

> The poorest fifth of the country, whose average income is $8400 a year, saw their incomes decline by nine per cent
> The next poorest fifth, with an average income of $20,100 a year, saw their incomes decline by one per cent.,
> The next poorest fifth, with an average income of $32,700 saw their incomes rise by a modest four per cent in the Reagan 'boom'. The next fifth, with an average income of $47,900.. saw their earnings rise by nine per cent over the 12 years
> The richest fifth, with an average $109,400 a year.. saw their incomes rise by a heartening 29 per cent. But the richest one per cent of the nation, with an average $559,800 a year, saw their already lavish incomes soar by 77 per cent. (*Guardian Weekly,* March 15).

The number of people applying for unemployment benefits has gone up from 7.1 to 7.3 per cent. Obviously, Reagan had said: "a rising tide raises all boats" and the increased wealth and incomes of the rich would benefit those who were down below, stands refuted. Bill Clinton of the Democratic Party is fully justified when he says:

> The Reagan-Bush policy of trickle-down economics was a fraud, a damnable lie, and a miserable way to cheat our poorest people.

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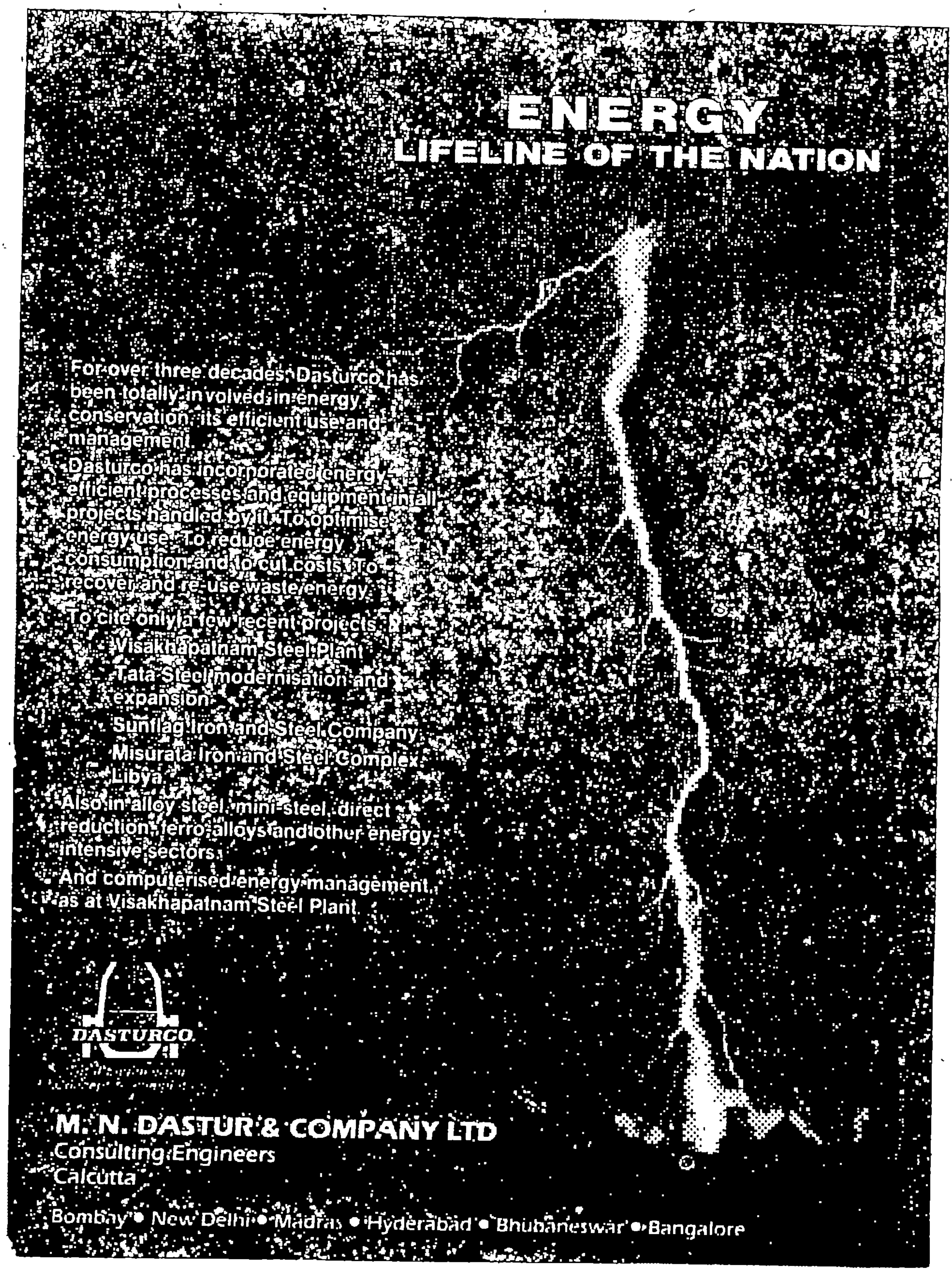
IN our country, for quite some time, a lobby is active in pushing the trickle-down strategy down the throat of the government. It holds that the money allocated to poverty alleviation programmes and social services is a waste and there should be no emphasis on distributional aspects. The government should stress only the maximisation of the GNP. It believes that investment and production should be oriented mainly towards the top ten per cent. Once, their incomes rise, they will employ more people directly or help generate employment opportunities indirectly. They will, for example, need ACs which in turn will generate employment opportunities for those connected with their production and maintenance. In agriculture, without bothering about the existing inegalitarian property relations, growth of production should be ensured whose benefits would percolate downwards and poverty would gradually vanish. One of the chief proponents, Dr M.S. Ahluwalia, occupies a very influential position in the decision-making structure. Similarly, there are several others who have been inspired by Michael Lipton whose paper (World Bank Staff Working Paper No. 597) is strong justification of the trickle-down strategy. If these people are allowed to have their way, it would pose a big danger to the Congress and the poor would be completely alienated and social tensions are bound to mount. One must not forget what Prof Sukhamoy Chakravarty has said:

> ... we need to strengthen the planning process in a strategic sense, because.. there is nothing in economic theory that would suggest leaving things to market forces alone. A spatial 'trickle down' strategy is unlikely to work fast enough in a large and heterogeneous country like India.

We must not lose sight of what has happened in the USA.

It is heartening to note that the Prime Minister has put his foot down on the question of food subsidies and rural development and poverty alleviation programmes. ■

(Courtesy: *Patriot*)



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Ambedkar as a Builder of Modern India

BASANTA KUMAR MALLIK

On the occasion of Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar's birth anniversary on April 14, we are publishing the following article.

—Editor

Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar was one of the very few Indians who launched a ceaseless struggle to change the course of Indian history and contributed phenomenally to national upliftment in pre-independent and independent India.

"One man one value" was the most egalitarian message of Dr Ambedkar. To him, "political democracy cannot last unless lies at the base of it social democracy".[1] Social democracy was his lofty contribution for the growth of modern Indian society. He was the chief architect of the Indian Constitution. He left a lasting impress on and shaped Indian polity by laying emphasis on liberty, equality, fraternity and justice to each and every citizen of the country.

In the present paper, there is an attempt to discuss the contribution of Dr Ambedkar to build the nation and modern India.

Dr Ambedkar launched a social movement from the twenties to the fifties to secure human rights for the exploited Indians and alongwith this movement he actively participated in all the deliberations of Constitution-making from the Montford Reforms (1919) to the Cabinet Mission Scheme (1946). He was called upon to give evidences before the Southborough Franchise Committee, set up in the light of Montague-Chelmsford Reforms. Discussing the various constitutional aspects of India Dr Ambedkar advocated a "government by the people" rather than a "government for the people". To him, "a government for the people but not by the people, is sure to educate some into masters and others into subjects". To be specific, he said:

> It is not enough to be electors only: It is necessary to be law-makers; otherwise who can be law-makers will be masters of those who can only be electors.[2]

Thus in 1919, Dr Ambedkar demanded extension of political power to the grassroots level of society irrespective of caste and class, creed and colour.

Supporting the nationalists' demand of "Home Rule" for India, Dr Ambedkar argued that every individual irrespective of caste, creed and colour must have his share in the "Home Rule". In this light he observed:

> It was the duty of the advanced classes to put all on social equality. For everybody recognised that home rule was as much the birthright of a Brahmin, as that of a Mahar.[3]

To him, the extension of adult franchise—that is, the right to vote—alone was not sufficient to ameliorate the deprived condition of the Depressed Classes. Therefore, he demanded separate electorates and reserved seats for them in proportion to their population. He advised the Untouchable leaders that they should not be nominated by the government; rather, they should be elected by the Untouchables themselves. The non-Brahmins as a class (Backward Classes) are subjected to the social and intellectual domination of the Brahmin Priesthood and may therefore rightly advocate separate representation,[4] he observed emphatically.

Although Dr Ambedkar was responsible for enabling the Untouchables as an indispensable community to share power and dignity in the country, he made a notable contribution towards the growth of the constitutional system by giving evidence before the Simon Commission (1928) on May 17, 1929. He submitted the following provisions to the Commission:

1) There should be no separation of Karnatak or Sind from the Bombay presidency.
2) The Legislature should be wholly elective through adult franchise. Under no circumstances the Executive be made irremovable.
3) All class and communal electorates should be abolished except for Europeans Reserved seats should be provided for Mohammedans, Depressed Classes, Anglo-Indians and to the non-Brahmins only if the franchise continues to be a restricted one The number of reserved seats shall be fixed on the basis of population.
4) There should be no second chamber in the province.
5) The Legislature should have power of appointing and removing the President, of defining its privileges and regulating its procedure. The Legislature should have power to move a motion of "no-confidence"[7] and to alter the Constitution subject to certain conditions.

The author is a Research Scholar, Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

6) There should be complete provincial autonomy. The division of functions between the Central and Provincial should be reconsidered with a view to do away with the control of Central Government, now operating through the system of previous sanction and subsequent veto.
7) The Section 2 of the Government of India Act which obscured the position of the Crown in relation to the governance of India to be deleted
8) Civil services should be Indianised accompanied by different scales of salary and allowances. In the course of Indianisation of services arrangement should be made for the fulfilment of the claims of the Backward Classes. There should be a distinct Provincial Civil Service and the Secretary of State should cease altogether to perform the function of a recruiting agency.[5]

The patriotic zeal of Dr Ambedkar has been reflected in all the demands put forth before the Simon Commission. He urged the Commission to treat the Depressed Classes as a distinct community, entirely different from the Hindus. He wanted their political interest to be safeguarded through constitutional provisions.[6] Dr Ambedkar's arguments were indeed convincing and thought-provoking.

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THE Round Table Conference (1930-32) held in London to discuss constitutional matters was a major breakthrough in the history of the freedom movement and the constitutional development of India. The statesman-like stand and patriotic deliberations of Dr Ambedkar at the Round Table Conference shall ever be cherished by his countrymen. He criticised the British Government for not adopting any steps to uplift the Untouchables during the last 150 years of their colonial rule in India. He was of the firm opinion that the British Government was not able to redress the grievances of the people of India and that was only possible by a *Swaraj* Government. To him, the bureaucratic form of government in India should be replaced by a democratic form of government and in this light he said before the assembly of world delegates:

> We must have a government in which men in power will give their undivided allegiance to the best interest of the country. We must have a government in which men in power, knowing where obedience will end and resistance will begin, will not be afraid to amend the social and economic code of life which the dictates of justice and expediency so urgently call for. This role the British Government will never be able to play It is only a government which is of the people, by the people and for the people that will make this possible[7]

Dr Ambedkar did not want a government that would signify a mere change of masters. To him, the Legislature was to be fully and really representative with a responsible Executive. He put forth a very vital point deeply concerned about the fate of the Depressed Classes as well as the Indian nation. He observed:

> As members of a minority we look to the Central Government to act as a powerful curb on the provincial majority to save the minorities from misrule of the majority. As an Indian, interested in the growth of Indian nationalism, I must make it plain that I am a strong believer in the Unitary form of Government. This Unitary Government has been the most potent influence in the building of the India nation.[8]

The courageous views and the pragmatic approach of Dr Ambedkar made him a towering personality in the Round Table Conference and he warned the British Government that no Constitution would be workable which was not acceptable to the majority of the people. He fearlessly said:

> The time when you were to choose and India was to accept is gone, never to return. Let the consent of the people and not the accident of logic be the touchstone of your new Constitution, if you desire that it should be worked.[9]

From this patriotic standpoint of Dr Ambedkar it was quite plain that he wanted a strong Central Government not only to save the minorities from the misrule of the majority, but also to hold the nation united and integrated. The Conference set up nine sub-committees to look into various constitutional matters in detail and Dr Ambedkar served on the Federal Structure Committee, the Minority Committee and Sub-Committee, the Provincial Constitution Sub-Committee, the Service Sub-Committee and the Franchise Sub-Committee,[10] with the great luminaries from India and England who decided the fate of Indians and the nature of the Constitution.

Dr Ambedkar demanded common citizenship, universal adult franchise, free use of common and civic rights, and adequate representation of all classes in Legislature and government services. In the Provincial Constitution Sub-Committee, he asked for complete provincial autonomy. To him, provincial autonomy must also consider provincial questions of all-India character, undefined powers must be left with the Central Government, and protection for the interests of the minorities and the Depressed Classes must be assured. The evolution of the conception of a United India and definite emergence of the Depressed Classes in the political picture of India were the achievements of Ambedkar's eloquence.[11]

The Government of India Act, 1935 was born out of the proceedings of the Round Table Conferences held in the 1930s. Most of the constitutional thoughts of Dr Ambedkar appeared in this Act for which he rose prominently both among the intellectuals and statesmen of the world. He organised the labour movement and also the Independent Labour Party of India during 1936-37. In 1937, he was elected to the Bombay Legislative Assembly and took up the economic problems of the peasants, agricultural labourers and the workers coming from all sections of society.[12] It must be noted that in the first popular provincial assembly Ambedkar was the first legislator of India to introduce a Bill for the abolition of serfdom of agricultural tenants. On different occasions, he dealt with the problems of landless labourers, small holdings, abolition of *khoti* and *mahar watan*, collective farming, land revenue, currency system, universalisation of education, modern means of birth-control, and abolition of landlordism to mention a few. He was deeply committed to the cause of the working class and their security. He worked as a Labour Member in the Executive Council of two Viceroys, Lord Wavell and Lord Linlithgow. The "Labour Charter" propounded by him in the Viceroy's Executive Council on September 2, 1945 subsequently became the basis of the labour welfare scheme in the Indian subcontinent.

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DR AMBEDKAR became a Labour Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council on July 20, 1942 and resigned in June 1946. That period, though short, was remarkable in the history of labour legislation and welfare in the country. It was during this period that the Factory Act was amended to ensure holidays with pay, the Indian Mines Act and Mines Maternity Benefit Act were amended to provide larger benefits and better facilities to workers. Dr Ambedkar defined the demands of the labour for food, clothing, shelter, education, cultural amenities and health resources. He laid emphasis on equal treatment for labour, whether industrial or agricultural labourers.[13] However, it was during the same period that a really important piece of legislation was passed concerning the terms and conditions of employment. But it was the constitution of Statutory Welfare Funds, Joint Labour Management Committees, establishment of Employment Exchanges and the breakthrough in the field of "Social Insurance" for which Dr Ambedkar will be long remembered.[11]

During this time the Central Waterways, Irrigation and Navigation Commission (CWINC) was set up and the Commission continued to work under the Department of Labour until the bifurcation of Ministry in 1946. In addition to this a Forced Labour Commission was also set up. The question of finding suitable persons to head these Commissions was no easy task. It was not that engineers or civil servants from England or America were wanting. Dr Ambedkar, for reasons purely patriotic, was in favour of filling these posts by Indians. Finally, he invited Dr A.N. Khosla, a prominent engineer, to head the Central Waterways, Irrigation and Navigation Commission[13] and V.V. Giri (who later became the President of India) to head the Forced Labour Commission [16] Purely patriotic was the work of Dr Ambedkar and he believed that the growth of the nation and modern India could be possible only by Indians themselves.

As a Labour Member and in additional charge of Irrigation and Power, Dr Ambedkar inaugurated a new policy of utilisation of water resources for the prevention of flood and development of the country. He held Multipurpose River Valley Conferences in Calcutta on January 3, 1945 and August 11, 1945 and discussed with the representatives of the Bengal and Bihar Governments about the Damodar River Valley Project.[17] A similar kind of conference he also presided over in Cuttack on November 8, 1945 and discussed about the Mahanadi River Multipurpose Project.[18] The projects were first of its kind with the objectives of: a) flood control, b) navigation, c) irrigation and drainage, d) soil conservation, and e) power generation. However, it is a pleasure to note that the Mahanadi River Valley Project led to the construction of the Hirakud Dam of Orissa and it stood as a remarkable contribution of the plan and policy of Dr Ambedkar. According to the recommendation of Dr A.N. Khosla, the spot of the dam was selected to be at Sambalpur and Dr Ambedkar took the final decision about the Hirakud Dam after holding discussions with the Governments of Madhya Pradesh and Orissa in 1946. The plan and design of the dam was prepared during the period of Dr Ambedkar, but the work could not start because of the country's attainment of indepencence in 1947. It started in 1948 and was completed in 1956.[19] Such was Dr Ambedkar's unparalleled contribution towards laying the infrastructural foundation of modern India.

Dr Ambedkar placed a memorandum before the Cabinet Mission (1946) asking for a provision to be made in the Constitution for the election of Depressed Classes through separate electorates. He also stressed the importance of a new settlement, emphasised the need for a Settlement Commission, demanded adequate representation in the Central and Provincial Legislatures, as well as Executives, in the Public Services and on the Public Service Commissions, federal as well as provincial, and urged for earmarked sums for education of the members of the Depressed Classes. The main feature of the memorandum was that it demanded the inclusion of these safeguards in the new Constitution.[20]

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DR Ambedkar's greatest contribution to his motherland is the Constitution. He was the chief architect of the supreme law of the land and he played a significant role in shaping the structure of government and Indian polity as well. While towering personalities like Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel, Dr Rajendra Prasad, C. Rajagopalachari, K.M. Munshi, Alladi Krishnaswamy Ayyar and a galaxy of jurists, statesmen and leaders of various sections of people moulded the founding Deed, Dr Ambedkar was the Chairman of the Drafting Committee. The enactment was complete on November 26, 1949 and came into force on January 26, 1950. The Sovereign, Democratic Republic of India thus sprang into existence on January 26, 1950. Presenting the Draft Constitution to the Constituent Assembly Dr Ambedkar made a scathing observation that the Assembly established political democracy in India but left out social and economic democracy which were the essence of "Social Justice". In his words:

> We must make our political democracy a social democracy as well. Political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it social democracy. What does social democracy mean? It means a way of life which recognises liberty, equality and fraternity as the principles of life.[21]

Dr Ambedkar sincerely endeavoured to build a modern Indian society by making it "casteless" and "classless" through the constitutional principles. He was deeply concerned over economic and social exploitation. According to him, peace, happiness and prosperity would be a dream for India unless there was a structural change in society and economy. In the same address he warned:

> On the social plane we have in India a society based on the principle of graded inequality which means elevation for some and degradation for others. On the economic plane, we have a society in which there are some who have immense wealth as against many who live in abject poverty.. ... How long shall we continue to live this life of contradictions? How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this Assembly has so laboriously built up.[22]

In fact, political democracy without social and economic democracy is a double deception. Dr Ambedkar's anger and bitterness were justified.

The most creative contribution for the liberation of womenhood of India made by Dr Ambedkar shall long be cherished by posterity. The iconoclast in Dr Ambedkar, who publicly burnt *Manusmriti* in 1927, was himself the chief instrument in giving to Hindu community another *smriti* or the law of living in conformity with the requirements and needs of modern times. He rejected the orthodox scriptures of Manu and compiled the "Hindu Code Bill" giving socio-religious equality for men and women, for which he was called the "modern Manu". But it was unfortunate that the time did not favour the ardent advocacy of Dr Ambedkar to change the order of life from social ostracism to the path of progress. A man of conviction and courage, Dr Ambedkar resigned from Nehru's Cabinet on that score.[23] However, his vision of equality not only between men and men, but also between men and women is yet to be translated into practice.

Another important contribution of Dr Ambedkar to Indian progress was faith in a constitutional order and working for its change. The 'civil disobedience methodology' would be a Grammar of Anarchy, he thought. He was a burning nationalist who condemned the British for its deportation of Tilak and Savarkar and the repressive India Press Act, 1910. So did he criticise British bureaucracy and their deceptive political reforms. More than any Indian it was Dr Ambedkar who fought for the philosophy of social equality and the indictment, not merely of the caste system, but also of the stratified systems of inequality.[24]

Besides drafting the Constitution, Dr Ambedkar's contribution to national unification is highly noteworthy. Speaking on the occasion, he said the princely states could not have an existence apart from the Indian Union. The people of India have declared themselves for the Union and that decision must be given effect to immediately.[25] He also strongly urged upon the Hyderabad and Travancore states to join with the Indian Union.[26] He remarked that India would not recognise the princely states' independence nor accord them the status of an independent state. The only way by which the Indian states could free themselves from Paramountcy would be to bring about a merger of their sovereignty with the Indian Union.[27] Thus Dr Ambedkar's lasting contribution to build the United Modern India shall long be treated with profound honour.

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SUMMARISING his evidence before the State Reorganisation Committee he said there could be either 1) one State, one language or 2) one language, many States. He advocated acceptance of the second proposal which was for eliminating the disparity between the different States.[28] The vision of Ambedkar finally came to be translated into practice and various States were organised with one language. Criticising the attempt to create the linguistic provinces, Dr Ambedkar said:

> A linguistic State with its regional language as its official language may easily develop into an independent nationality. The road between an independent nationality and an independent state is very narrow. If this happens, India will cease to be the Modern India we have and will become the Medieval India consisting of a variety of States indulging in rivalry and warfare.

> How can this danger be met? It is to provide in the Constitution that the regional language shall not be the official language of the State. The official language shall be Hindi and until India becomes fit for this purpose, English. One language can unite people. Two languages are sure to divide people. Culture is conserved by language. Since Indians wish to unite and develop a common culture it is the bounden duty of all Indians to own up Hindi as their language.[28]

However, in the Draft Constitution, he made Hindi in *devnagari* script as the national language and the Lion capital with *Ashok Chakra* as the national symbol of India.[29] He wanted the country to project the mission of peace and universal brotherhood through her historic symbols.

Dr Ambedkar suggested that a second capital of India to built from the viewpoint of southerners and the defence of India. To him, Delhi was a vulnerable place. It was within bombing distance of the neighbouring countries. Secondly, the feeling of the southern people was that the capital of their country was far away from them and that they were being ruled by the people of northern India. The first consideration was, of course, more important. From that point of view, he thought that Hyderabad, Secundarabad or Bolarum might be chosen as the second capital of India. According to him, this would facilitate the easing of tension between the north and the south.[31]

Dr Ambedkar was a social revolutionary and an eminent political thinker. He denounced the traditional values and established new ideas. To him, law was the guardian of liberty and equality, and all citizens were equal before the law. He tried to seek harmony between people and the legal power of the state. So he visualised the need for an Independent Judiciary to safeguard the rights of all individuals. His whole theory of democratic organisation, to use the language of Montesquieu, may be characterised as the theory of "Checks and Balances".[32] Dr Ambedkar's liberalism was combined with a radical nationalism. His ethics were utilitarian, his scale of value was determined by the usefulness of an action towards the establishment of equality in social order. His loyalty to India was as great as his hatred for the orthodox values of the Hindu society. An eminent educationist, economist, jurist, constitutional expert, a versatile genius and, above all, a nation-builder, Dr Ambedkar was deeply inspired by the most enlightened philosophy of *prajna, samata* and *karuna* and embraced Buddhism to revive an egalitarian world social order. His acceptance of Buddhism was an unparalleled example of his patriotism, which ultimately became a blessing for millions in Indian society. Had he accepted any other religion, it might have created a political problem.

Dr Ambedkar's life was a saga of struggle for human rights and dignity. His patriotic contribution to the cause of freedom at the Round Table Conference and his statesman-like stand in the Constituent Assembly will long be cherished by all the freedom loving people of the world. However, his pragmatic approach to India' social and political problems enabled him to become one of the greatest patriots and nation-builders in the twentieth century. ■

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Women will be Worst Hit

MODHUMITA MOJUMDAR

This article was presented by the author, a well-known columnist, at a conference on Debt Crisis, Globalisation and Social Justice organised by the People's Institute for Development and Training in New Delhi (March 27-29, 1992).

—Editor

India faces a serious debt crisis—not merely because of the policies on the economic front pursued during the brief tenure of the past two governments, but in the main because of the lopsided socio-economic programmes and colossal financial mismanagement that has been a steadily growing feature over the past four decades and more during most of which we have had a Congress Government at the Centre. During this period, increasingly since 1947, lip service has been paid to Gandhi, the Mahatma, and there has been ritual spinning of yarn on the *charkha* at Rajghat every October 2 and January 30; but, right from Day One, there has been no intention of following the socio-economic pattern for our society that the Father of the Nation had visualised for a Free India.

One cannot, perhaps, blame Nehru for it—since he did not have our advantage of hindsight—but he had led the country to the pursuit of the Big and the Brash, mistaking it for the Beautiful. While the middle class that forms a bare 10 per cent of the population hankered for more and more dazzling new consumer goods, well-meaning national leaders sought to imitate the Soviet model in order to lift the country up through a mix of big industries and big irrigation projects—Nehru referring to the large dams and smoke-belching factory chimneys appreciatively as the "temples of modern India".

Land reforms have been only on paper. Indeed, the much-vaunted Green Revolution, which was mainly confined to Punjab and western Uttar Pradesh, has created a new class of big farmers while virtually exterminating the small and marginal farmers and leading to the pauperisation of the bulk of the 80 per cent of our people who live in villages. We were able to build up large foodstocks, and even export rice and wheat, only because a very large number of our people went to bed hungry—unable to buy enough cereals for meeting their basic needs. Along with this, there has been lopsided economic growth with easy money to be made on articles that cater to the artificially created needs for luxury products among the top 10 per cent of our society. The rise in our GDP would have been more and steady as well had the domestic market for industrial goods been as large as our population warrants. This means not just poverty alleviation programmes like Food for Work and so on that we have occasionally had—with the tanks dug and the roads built in a lean season being allowed to go into disrepair as soon as the acute crisis was over—but real generation of employment that would create its own momentum of growth and development in the true sense of the term. The main problem has not been the public sector industries (though these too have been grossly mismanaged), but the private generation of wealth which, as we have seen in all these years, does not really trickle down in any significant manner to bring about greater equity.

In addition to this, our industrial and irrigation projects have created a pollution problem and ecological imbalance; an imbalance that is growing with our fast-growing population and rapid deforestation owing to the increasing demand for timber mainly among the affluent urban section—leading to a cycle of drought and floods and a grave threat to the land, particularly in the Himalayan region and other hills, as well as a dangerous silting up of tanks and river beds.

In order to ensure this dubious kind of development, the Indian Government has been borrowing with increasing recklessness from foreign banks—the IMF and World Bank, as well as their various windows. Now, in order to have still more of the same, and to service those debts, the Government of India is frantically trying to obtain hefty loans from the same creditors. It seems that the commercial banks will not give India any further loans. Hence desperate measures are being adopted to obtain what the Fund-Bank will give, no matter that strings are attached to them. It would seem what the "national shame" of being a defaulter in the matter of repaying our loans would be far more than the shame of surrendering our economic sovereignty to basicaly the USA, operating not only through the IMF and the World Bank, but also now, through the GATT which has suddenly assumed a role that never was its. Instead of treating them with the contempt they deserve, New Delhi is actually considering the Dunkel prosposals and going through the exercise of seeing its way to fit India into the scheme of things visualised for this nation by Arthur Dunkel.

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AFTER the collapse of the Soviet model, our leaders seem to have hit the panic button. In a way, Prime Minister Narasimha Rao and Dr Manmohan Singh are right: there is a kind of consensus among all our political parties on the basic mix that the present government is offering our people. And that mix was evolved in the Nehru years—a mix for which nobody seems to have an acceptable alternative. This is, in the main, due to our cultural bankruptcy. Iron curtain or no, the Soviet Union had sought to model itself on the capitalist pattern—envying the glittering lights of New York and Paris, and trying through state capitalism to provide the kind of obvious prosperity of the West and providing no substitute for the consumer culture that went with it. What our leaders did was to try and reproduce this very model, without paying the kind of price that the USSR had paid for even this shadow capitalism. Our political as well as intellectual leaders wanted to be patted on their backs by both the USA and the USSR—and fell between the two stools. Now, with the USSR having crumbled, we are attaching ourselves like limpets to Washington and the West. This does not amount to globalisation. Genuine globalisation would have been to increase our trade and other ties with the countries of the South—many of them prosperous but without the kind of technological competence that India has today. Indeed, the present economic policies of New Delhi do not represent hard options—although their effect will be harsh on the majority of our people. They are the obvious options—representing soft, economic thinking and an inability to learn from past mistakes and failures—our own and that of others (recession and mindless destruction of the environement are only two of the many problems facing the Western nations)—or to innovate.

Especially at a time when our leaders are harping on the need to provide a better deal to women and the girl child, it is ironical that policies that would harm women the most are being pursued at the behest of the IMF and the World Bank. Our Prime Minister has bravely proclaimed that food subsidies will not be snatched away—no matter what the World Bank says. However, the administered issue prices of commodies available in the fair price shops have been increased and may be raised further. On the other hand, little or nothing has been done to prevent hoarding, blackmarketing of cereals and sugar by owners of the so-called FPS, or to ensure a certain minimum quality of the stuff sought to be affloaded on the people through these shops. Given the fact that in India, as of now, it is the woman who is solely responsible for the running of the household, feeding her family and taking care of her children, with the man being neither physically nor emotionally involved with domestic and parental chores, it is she who is going to be the hardest hit in the coming months.

The people have been asked to tighten their belts and undergo hardships in the interest of the nation. But the nation means its people including women. and what further sacrifice is expected of the Indian woman who is already starving and watching her children wither away due to malnutrition—brought about through sheer inadequacy of food intake? For it is simply not a question of the mother being ignorant of the virtues of a balanced diet, as the UNICEF, WHO and our own Health Ministry would have us believe, but a simple question of stark hunger.

Even if the country's economy bounces back to an even keel, even if the miracle of the average family budget becoming a well-balanced one happens in the next two years, what about the millions of children who face starvation, ill-health and death in the intervening period? Any period of crisis is particularly hard on women and children. This is true of all man-made and natural calamities. The present times are a period of agony and their lasting effect on the physical and mental health of the majority of Indian women cannot be brushed aside. Women, after all, constitute nearly one-half of our population.

The agony of a mother who sees her own child wane away for lack of food, however, has not moved our leaders all these years and is unlikely to bother Dr Manmohan Singh too much. A few land *pattas* here, a sewing machine or a blanket there—and these very women will be coaxed to see the government as a benevolent and paternalistic one. As long as politicians are assured of the votes of the illiterate masses, they could not care less about

(Continued on page 33)

Bearing the Brunt of Structural Adjustment

K. RAVI SRINIVAS

For the other half of humankind, the eighties brought little cheer as the global economic crisis, particularly the debt crisis of the Third World, and structural adjustment policies resulted in drastic cuts in government spending in various sectors especially in health.

The fact that 'Adjustment without Human Face' will bring only disastrous consequences for millions of poor women and children was highlighted by the UNICEF in its annual reports. But the crisis is far from over and the structural adjustment programmes are pursued in many more countries including India. Recently, the newly appointed Chairperson of the National Commission for Women expressed her concern about the impact of the liberalisation policies on women.

Women and the World Development Series: 'Women & The World Economic Crisis'; prepared by Jeanne Vickers, 1991; Zed Books Ltd, London/New Jersey; pp. 146.

This book discusses the finance and trade policies, the debt crisis, the meaning of structural adjustment for poor women and children and the initiatives taken by various UN agencies, grass-root organisations in various countries, and how the women encountered the issue. It provides examples from Ghana, Jamaica, Philippines, Mexico and Zambia on efforts of the women to face this crisis. It also explains that in the developed nations too women are the worst hit by the governments' reduced allocations on health and social security schemes and recession. Thus, be it the developed nations or the developing ones, it is the women and children who bear the brunt of structural adjustment.

This book is quite relevant in the Indian context as the government is going ahead with liberalisation and structural adjustment programmes. The experiences of women in the Third World countries where structural adjustment programmes were implemented under the guidance of the World Bank and the IMF are discussed in detail in this book. It should make us aware of the sinister implications of the programmes. But the tragedy is that this aspect has not been given the importance it deserves, neither by the media nor by the Opposition parties. Recently, WEMOS, a group on women and pharmaceticuals, released a report according to which the reduction in public health programmes in the Latin American nations has resulted in an increase in epidemic diseases. It is clear that in the long run the consequences of structural adjustment programmes, which ignore the real needs of people, will be disastrous in terms of health, education and public welfare.

This book will be very useful in understanding the issues and the implications for women. It is free from jargon and the use of graphics, cartoons and illustrations make it all the more readable.

It contains a bibliography, addresses of women's groups and other institutions which are involved in these issues. It can be used by women's groups to conduct workshops and seminars. Even a layperson will benefit much by reading this as it demystifies the structural adjustment process and raises important questions about trade, aid and development.

This book forms part of a series of books developed by the UN/NGO Group on Women and Development and published by Zed Books. The series examines various developmental issues from the women's perspective. For example, other books in the series discuss Women and Environment, Women and Health, Women and Disability, etc. The UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service offers these books at no cost for interested individuals and organisations from the Third World. ■

Effective Dramatisation of Gulf War

SHABNAM

To mark the first anniversary of the Gulf war, a special meeting was organised by the Modern Languages Department of the AMU, Aligarh; the subject of discussion being "War, Theatre and the Third World" with special reference to *Sehra-e-Aazam*, a play by Zahida Zaidi.

The convenor of the meeting Dr D. Murthy introduced the subject underlining the changing concept of the Third World. After the end of the so-called Cold War, he pointed out, the Third World had become a soft target of imperialist onslaughts; and in view of the changed international scenario it should be re-christianed as the Second World.

Opening the discussion Prof Zahida Zaidi remarked that the vital relationship between theatre and war was as old as the history of theatre itself. Greek tragedy had a prolonged war as its background. War is quite central to Shakespeare's tragic and historical plays as to the plays of his other contemporaries. Indeed innumerable examples of a war moulding the action of a play can be found in world drama through the ages: for the confrontation of two opposing forces, wills or personalities, which is often elevated to a conflict between good and evil has always held a special attraction for the theatre. But drama and literature, she pointed out, that emerged after the Second World War, had a different connotation. Its basic shared quality was its anit-war stance, it was essentially a literature of protest. Her play, *Sehra-e-Aazam*, she claimed, was also an anti-war drama of protest with the difference that it had been written from the Third World point of view and was perhaps the first drama of its kind about the Gulf war.

The Gulf war, she asserted, was more like a world war in its scope, intensity and far-reaching implications, and was unprecedented in its cruelty, bloodshed and wholesale destruction. Human values were some of its first casualties and misuse of language and media touched dizzy heights. But while the ruling cliques of all shades and hues joined hands with an aggressive superpower and the UNO became a hand-maiden of American imperialism, people registered their protest everywhere. Particularly the people of the Third World saw it as a vicious attack on their freedom, identity and aspirations. She had tried to absorb all these and several other related themes in her play, she said. But it was not a realistic drama, she pointed out. It was rather a fantasy in which historical facts were presented in the tantalising guise of fiction with a view to give them a universal emphasis. Seen from another angle it was a terrible tragedy projected as a political satire. She said she had used the central characters of Samuel Beckett's masterpiece, *Waiting for Godot*, as chorus characters in this play. They reflect the bewilderment, suffering and helplessness of the common man and also bring in an element of human warmth and sanity in this spectacle of hellish madness.

Prof Asloob Ahmad Ansari remarked that *Sehra-e-Aazam* was a powerful drama with its own coherence and artistic integrity and should be very effective if produced for the stage. He said the horrors of war and sufferings of people were depicted very vividly in this play and the chorus of Beckett's characters was highly imaginative and appropriate. It not only reflected the sentimente of the common man but also provided a structural principle in this play. The play, he pointed out, dramatised a conflict of good and evil but on the whole the force of evil was more dominant and articulate. Perhaps the absence of Behram from the stage was responsible for this impression. On the other hand, the speeches of Emperor Cactus were too long and he dominated the action throughout. He further pointed out that the author was perhaps too intensely involved in the experience and at times has not been able to maintain an artistic distance.

Prof Sajida Zaidi, the next commentator, throwing light on the Gulf war said that it was not only a political war to demolish and dominate a part of the Third World but also a psychological war to strike terror in the minds of Third World people and to crush their spirits—a war to demonstrate the absolute power of American imperialism. She said the war has not ended but continues in other ways and the Third World people should assert themselves to counter the unholy designs of the imperialist powers. She said Zahida Zaidi had very effectively projected various problems arising from this war including the breakdown of values and degradation of language. But the chorus of Gogo and Didi was too passive to project the strong protest of the people all over the world.

Miss Anwar Jahan Zuberi remarked that the role of media in this war was most callous and hypocritical. While the eye of a suffering bird was flashed again and again on TV screen there was no projection of immense human suffering and widespread destruction. She said the play, no doubt, dramatised the clash of good and evil but she did not agree with the view that the forces of good were too weak. As in Karbala, she said, Yazid achieved a military victory but the moral victory belonged to Imam Husain. So in *Sehra-e-Aazam* the victory of Emperor Cactus was dubious and incomplete and it comes out very well in the symbolic scene of Behram's beads. She said another important point that the play incorporates is the inadequate and hypocritical role of the so-called peace-makers which comes out very well in the scene entitled "The Drama of Peace".

Mrs Amina Kishore, another participant, stated that in her opinion the absence of Behram from the stage was a significant device. We see this character not just as an adversary of Emperor Cactus but as a symbolic figure embodying Truth or the conscience of the Third World. She said the chorus of Beckett's characters also lends a universal significance to a historical situation, and was a good example of literary transformation.

Dr M. Subramanyam pointed out that this war was a consequence of weakness and withdrawal of the Soviet Union and its recent collapse invests the Third World with additional responsibilities.

Summing up the discussion Prof Zahida Zaidi conceded that some of the speeches of Cactus were too long and she had shortened some of them in her English translation of the play. She said she was no doubt intensely involved in the situation but she tried to achieve an artistic distance by the use of irony, chorus and other alienation devices. She said the absence of Behram in *Sehra-e-Aazam* was quite deliberate. She also agreed that the victory of Emperor Cactus was dubious and deceptive and the forces of good cannot be crushed completely. She said Gogo and Didi were symbolic characters borrowed from a dramatic masterpiece and they could not be made more dynamic; but she had projected the strong protest of the people in other ways also and it was a constant theme in her play. ■

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From Romanticism to Practicality

A Fresh Look at Indo-Russian Relations

V. OVCHINNIKOV

In an article in Pravda *on February 21, 1992, the well-known political commentator Vsevolod Ovchinnikov calls for closer economic, trade and political ties between Russia and India.*

—Editor

It is hardly surprising that the recent meeting of the Organisation of Economic Cooperation (OEC) in Teheran created a certain uneasiness in India. Now that apart from Iran, Pakistan and Turkey, the former Soviet republics of Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kirghizia and Tajikistan have become members of the OEC, and Kazakhstan has acquired the status of an observer, Delhi fears that this "Islamic Common Market" will radically alter the situation in the region—a change, moreover, which will not be in India's favour.

If the USA is trying to halt the growth of Iran's influence in the Middle East, India sees in what has been happening above all a gain for her chief opponent, Pakistan. Delhi perceives an anti-Indian trend both in the creation of an economic bloc—with Islam as the connecting link—and the plans to involve the former Central Asian republics of the USSR in the Islamic Conference Organisation (ICO). Indians know from experience what the explosive mixture of Islam and politics can lead to. The partition of British India on communal lines turned millions of people in the dismembered provinces of Bengal and Punjab into refugees. And in Kashmir a conflict on similar grounds has been smouldering for half a century, sometimes flickering and sometimes erupting with renewed force.

India's fears are quite understandable, though in my view, somewhat exaggerated. The interest shown by the Central Asian republics and their close neighbours in each other in the new conditions is but natural; just as natural is the pull towards regional integration which we observe at present all over the world. This is all the more so as Turkey has recently become the initiator of the Black Sea zone of economic cooperation, and Iran has proposed the creation of a similar zone in the Caspian Sea basin. However, in both these cases it is not only the Islamic states who are sought to be involved as participants.

The Teheran meeting drew attention to the political processes taking place in the zone extending from the north of the Indian borders to the south of the Russian borders and—judging by everything—that has become the last drop filling the cup of anxiety in relations between India and Russia. The disintegration of the USSR and Russia's intention to review the bilateral treaty of 1971, which obliges us to come to the aid of India in case of aggression against her, the disruption of trade and economic relations, including even the supply of military equipment, the disputes regarding loans and the rupee-rouble exchange rate—all this has been little by little hacking down the tree of "special relationship" which had spread its branches wide during the first years of *perestroika*.

The Delhi Declaration with its call for a non-nuclear non-violent world was considered in its time as an impressive example of New Thinking. As contrasted with Soviet-Indian relations, relations between Russia and India, it appears, are fated to be less emotional and more pragmatic. The first reactions to the proposal to leave out Article 9 in the Indo-Soviet Treaty were negative. But now commentators in Delhi more and more ask themselves the question: against whom do we need Moscow's support? The Chinese have normalised their relations both with the Russians and with the Indians. The same can be said even more strongly about the Americans. So far as Indo-Pakistan confrontation is concerned, after the withdrawal of the Soviet army from Afghanistan, Washington has become noticeably cool to Islamabad and has started actively pursuing the course of rapprochement with Delhi, including collaboration in the military field. We are, therefore, witnessing a basic change in the political landscape in the whole of South and West Asia.

But to admit that relations between Moscow and Delhi have "come down to earth", to approach reality as it is, does not at all mean denying their priority significance in the foreign policy of the two countries. Russia ought to cherish its relations with India, safeguard and develop the ties it has inherited, and should not allow the impression to grow as if India has receded to a second place in our relations.

After the end of the Cold War, the long-term strategic interests of Russia and India coincide. Both countries are interested in the multipolar structure of the world whose components would balance each other's influence. In the economic sphere the interdependence of the two states remains. India will for a long time need our military technology and supply of spare parts, and Russia will need consumer goods from India. In the international arena too Moscow and Delhi have been collaborating fruitfully for a long time. With her growing external debt and her predominantly raw material exports Russia, like India, is interested in the restructuring of the international economic order, in resolving the other global problems which tthe developing South poses before the developed North. And this too is a field where interaction is necessary.

One would like to hope that "Westcentrism", which at present characterises Russian diplomacy, will give way to a more balanced and farsighted policy. While carrying on an active dialogue with the capitals of the "Big Seven", we ought not to forget about Delhi. Even if there be less political romanticism and greater practical calculation in our mutual relations, their importance for the basic interests of both the Russians and Indians will grow all the more. ■

(Translated by Ravi M. Bakaya)

MODHUMITA: Women's World

(Continued from page 28)

their genuine will-being. Patronage in small doses, rather than sincere concern, seems to be that which pays dividends, as far as they are concerned.

With large-scale retrenchment of people from government service and public sector jobs in the offing, the axe will obviously first fall on women wage-earners. As well as this, women will be the last category to whom meaningful self-employment opportunities will be made available. For, women are generally taught how to sew, knit and embroider or to make jams, jellies and pickles. These are not products for which there is a ready market at present in the villages and the packaging and promotional expertise as well as the marketing network that will help sell such stuff in the towns and cities is totally absent. Women could be made employable by teaching them skills like masonry, carpentry, plumbing, weaving, basketry and so on for which there are ready markets—but most such skills are considered the preserve of men alone by extension workers and others, including voluntary agencies, who are charged with the task of improving the lot of women. Indeed, a bane of our lopsided kind of development has been that it has dislodged women from their existing position in the village economy. While women have traditionally stored grain, looked after poultry and so on, modern methods of storage, poultry, animal husbandry, etc. are taught only to rural men, not to the women-folk. In the coming months and years, this trend will only become more pronounced. Whichever way they try to turn, women will find their manoeuvrability drastically circumscribed. ■

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CHANDOLA: Nagaland

(Continued from page 3)

there, each candidate has to spend between Rs 30 and 50 lakhs in the elections. They no longer have the money for that for the third time in four years.

The money situation is also very tight in Nagaland now. Central funds for both budget and plan expenditure to the State are not increasing in the same manner as in the past years. The number of educated has increased, and the growth of jobs has not kept pace. For a tiny State there are already too many people holding government jobs. Private jobs are just not available. Well over 87 per cent of its people live on agriculture.

Ministers and officials have already cornered the easiest means of making extra money.

The biggest source is the sale of foodgrains and other essential items allotted to the State by the Centre. For instance, in 1991 the State had lifted 130,000 metric tonnes of rice from the Food Corporation of India godowns for distribution, at not more than Rs 2.50 a kilogram

Besides the towns, Dimapur, Kohima, Tuensang, Mon, Mokokchung, etc., the villagers neither need nor receive this subsidised rice. The requirement of the towns does not exceed 25,000 tonnes a year. The rest, and sometimes the whole lot, is sold outside the State at as much as Rs 12 or more a kilogram.

The Supply Minister's commission from this is one rupee a kilogram, which comes to over Rs 1 crore a month. Of course he would share this money with officials involved in the game and spend some of it on his own and party politics.

Then, last year the State lifted 74,500 tonnes of wheat, allotted to it by the Centre. The people in Nagaland are rice-eaters. Except for a handful of bakeries using a couple of thousand tonnes, the rest of it is sold outside, at several times the prices at which it is given to Nagaland. The same is true of sugar, edible oil, kerosene, cement, iron and steel, etc.

K.L. Chishi, who was the Chief Minister over a year ago, had said in a public meeting in Kohima that the ministerial commission from the sale of the centrally-supplied items was Rs 2.25 crores a month some three years ago.

Chief Ministers have been overthrown in fights over the sharing of this bounty. The one who shares most lasts longer.

Then there are other government departments, which make millions by giving out contracts for the supply of hundreds of thousands of items the state does not need. The most prominent among them are the PWD, public health engineering and medical. Most of them order substandard products, because the Ministers' and officials' commission on them is the highest.

Newspapers in Nagaland print stories of this corruption. *The Weekly Journal* of Kohima of November 22, 1989, printed a story of how "Rs 4.5 crores had been paid to some suppliers of spurious and substandard medicines and equipment", between November 10 and 15 that year. The paper said that the money was sanctioned on November 10 "as per order No MED-4/59/91/EX/IT and signed by the Secretary, Health and Family Welfare, Mr E.T. Sunup".

The PWD and public health engineering godowns in the State are choked full of water-pipes, fittings, valves, wash and toilet bowls and engineering items, which never used and are rusting away. These had no relation with the requirements of the State. They were ordered because there was a commission to be earned.

One has to go around Nagaland to see the palatial properties bought and built by Ministers and officials who were the same as the other villagers a little over a decade ago. The children of a large number of them study abroad or at the most expensive institutions in India. The caretaker Chief Minister has his daughter studying in the United States and his son undergoing anti-drug treatment (detoxification) in Hong Kong.

But then one cannot blame them. Making money, however one can, is the new political culture of India. The Nagas, new to it, have not lagged behind in catching up. ■

NATWAR SINGH Afghanistan

(Continued from page 4)

> refugees and the creation of the necessary conditions for their voluntary repatriation, as well as for the economic and social reconstruction of Afghanistan.

This plan was given credit support by the West and Pakistan and the Soviet Union. The UN General Assembly by its Resolution 45/12 of November 7, 1990 authorised the Secretary-General to try and implement the UN Plan.

The UN Plan could not be fully implemented so long as Dr Najibullah and the Watan Party remained at the helm. Ever the consumate political strategist, Najib has put the negotiating process in a tail-spin. This wholly unexpected turn of events has had a sobering effect in Islamabad and Washington. Both see Najib as a symbol of stability. Alarm bells have now begun to sound about the emergence of a "fundamentalist" Afghanistan. If the UN peace process was to flounder and with Najib gone, Afghanistan could split on tribal and ethnic lines. That would spell disaster for Pakistan. The demand for an independent Pushtoonistan would be revived with force and vigour. The Baluchis would follow the Pushtoons!

But for the success of the UN Plan the cooperation and support of President Najibullah was crucial. Now that this cooperation has been fully extended, Benon Sevan has paved the way for the cessation of hostilities. Additionally, he has worked another package which includes a general amnesty, human rights, and UN guarantees to ensure the sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence and the non-aligned and Islamic character of Afghanistan. Kabul, Islamabad, Teheran, Riyadh, Moscow, New York and Washington have all agreed The *mujahideen* too have fallen in line. So has King Zahir Shah.

How is a smooth and peaceful transition to be achieved in a society as violence prone as the Afghan? As I grow older, I realise the ultimate futility of all human arrangements and plans. I also realise that to throw up our hands and do nothing would be foolish and unwise. So, go on human beings must and do their best.

◆

AFTER my stay in Kabul I have returned conscious of one stark reality. *Every Afghan is tired and exhausted. All yearn for peace.* They want the guns silenced and the apparatus of state rediscovered, put together and set in motion. The first step will be to hold an *ijlaas*, of about 100. The names apparently have been agreed upon. The *ijlaas* will, if all goes well—and it is a big IF—recommend the establishment of an all-party coalition interim government. The *ijlaas* is to provide as wide an expression of the national opinion as possible in the existing circumstances. The *ijlaas* is to be held later this month or in early May in Vienna, Geneva or Kabul. The Interim Government will, from the beginning, lead the country to free elections. This is a perilous undertaking in a country where warlords and tribal chiefs decide and dispose off. How to get the democratic process moving is a great challenge. Everyone is keen to have a go at it having tried the dictatorship of the Communist Party.

What happens to Dr Najibullah and his Watan Party? He steps down. Most likely a collective leadership will emerge in the party, which is the only organised evenly spread political and administrative instrumentality in Afghanistan. It hopes to play an important role in the Interim Government. The Watan Party is not faction-free but it does have a structure and men of experience.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Afghan problem began to look different to the US and Pakistan. Fears of fundamentalism surfaced. Fears of Afghanistan splitting into three worried all its neighbours. Afghanistan has to be kept one and secular.

Does India, a traditional and historic friend of Afghanistan, have any role to play at the moment? Frankly, the answer is: no. This is mainly due to our keeping aloof from the Afghan problem since 1989. To jump in now would be unseemly, unwise and unwelcome by the UN, the USA and Pakistan and Iran. All we can do is to support the efforts of the UN, maintain and strengthen our links with all segments of Afghan society, seek fresh avenues of trade and aid, impress upon Pakistan to open the highway from Wagha to Peshawar and beyond. Now our humanitarian assistance goes to Kabul through Odessa on the Black Sea. We should participate in the rebuilding of Afghanistan to alleviate the wretchedness in which a great majority of Afghans live. We must never forget that for India the entire region from the Pamirs and the Hindu Kush to the Mekong is of relevance. My vision of the SAARC includes a democratic Afghanistan and a democratic Burma.

Finally, let us hope and pray that from now on Afghan history will be written in ink, not in blood. What Afghanistan needs is a reassertion of *douceur di vivre*—the sweetness of life. ■

(Courtesy: *The Hindustan Times*)

BAXI Alternative to 'Globalisation'

(Continued from page 6)

have travelled in a few months time can be best gauged by the disappearance of a sovereign Indian political metaphor: the foreign hand. The "foreign hand" was a powerful discursive entity in Indian politics. But to say today that the face of India that is Bharat is smitten by a huge foreign hand would evoke very little response from the media and the masses, much less an amused smile on the faces of the *cognoscenti*. So would the possible slogan: "The foreign hand is dead; long live the foreign hand!"

Third, with the erasure of the discourse on globalism and with the power of transforming the languages of practices of power, of course, marches the new vision of the world as one long chain of supermarkets and a constellation of shopping arcades redefining individual human beings to a mere consuming animal or machine. In this vision, the space for plurality shrinks and the pressure for homogenisation in market-friendly ways mounts. In this vision, large sections of the wretched of the earth are expendable. Already we are told by Jacques Atteli in his recent book, in effect, that we must write off the billions of peoples in the South as "millennial losers". Thus Africa is a "lost continent" while Latin America is progressively becoming a case of "terminal poverty".[3]

The new vision of ~~"globalisation"~~ is Social Darwinism updated for the next century; already strategic and military analysis is moving towards eradicating all possible threats from the millennial losers and terminal poor. The shrinking of human vision is of the same order, as of the first phase of "globalisation", and needs to be combatted.

It is this vision of the world which we must combat because through the promise of greater freedom it enslaves us all. We have to recover the spirit of the fifties and the sixties which celebrated "globalism" if we have to find an alternative to "globalisation". And we have to start that quest by rejecting the maxim "North knows Best" and repudiating new charters of domination by a fresh agenda of struggle. ■

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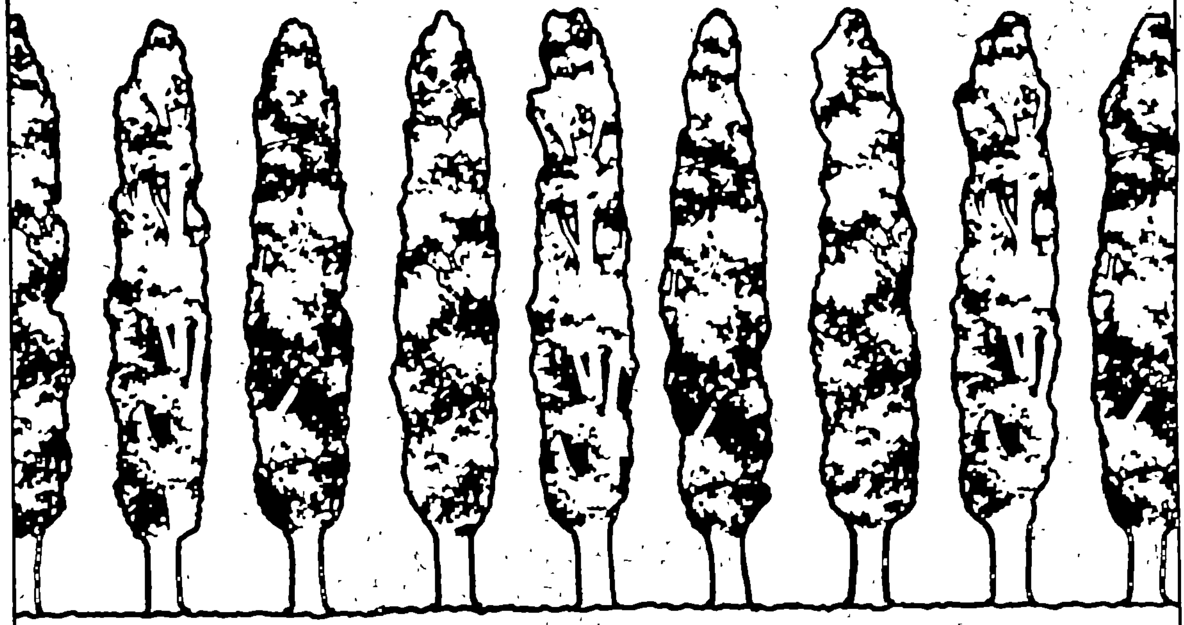

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EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

Confusion worse Confounded

It takes a long time for the mountain in agony to produce the mouse One would certainly not like to suggest by any stretch of imagination that any of the members of the just constituted Working Committee of the Indian National Congress could be equated with the rodent species, nor would like the present Congress President to claim to be a mountain by his own right

And yet one cannot help getting the feeling that when a party President takes one full month to form his high command—and that too with four vacancies yet to be filled out of twenty—he is bound to be regarded by the public at large as one who has lapsed into dithering in forming a team which normally should follow almost immediately after a Congress session. Then, the manner of striking out two senior members from the elected list and then to induct them in the nominated list is something really extraordinary and defies all principles of elective functioning

For one thing, has the Congress President the right to strike out the name of anybody who has been duly elected by the open Congress session, the highest body inside the party? On what ground could Arjun Singh and Sharad Pawar be dropped out of the elected list and then taken back in the nominated list? No provision of the party constitution invests the party President with such prerogative to treat the elected list in a cavalier fashion. Apart from the irregularity involved, this amounts to belittling the sanctity of any election.

If this is meant to demonstrate that their standing in the party is now cut down since they would from now on, figure only in the nominated list, this would indeed be an absurd proposition. For one thing, there is no difference whatsoever between an elected and a nominated member once the Working Committee is formed--they become all equal in the eyes of the party and the general public, and the party President too is not permitted to betray any difference in treating them.

It is said in some circles that Narasimha Rao was disturbed at the emergence within the party of a so-called syndicate jointly ventured by Arjun Singh and Sharad Pawar, the two contenders for the Prime Ministerial *gaddi* last year. This argument is hardly tenable because all reports from careful observers at the Congress session make it abundantly clear that no such syndicate was secretly formed at Tirupati. What is likely to have happened was that the two contending factions led by Arjun and Sharad came to a quiet understanding to ensure that their respective lists were not defeated by their internal rivalry; in other words, they might have forged an electoral ceasefire, a sort of deal which even political adversaries often strike in the election session

Granted that the party President was seriously upset by the spectre of a

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frightening syndicate at Tirupati which he felt may threaten his leadership, one has to question in all seriousness whether this is the way to bring about its liquidation. Rather, such a tampering with the electoral process might provide his challengers, if any, with an alibi that the party President needed to be checked in order that there is no arbitrariness in the functioning of the party as such. If Arjun Singh has promptly issued a statement swearing loyalty to the leader, that does not necessarily mean that everything would from now on be lovely in the garden.

The confusion over the formation of the Congress Working Committee has been worse confounded by this latest mess by the party President. There was a fresh breeze of morale uplift for the rank-and-file Congressmen when Narasimha Rao insisted on inner-party elections, however faulty they might have been. And he himself claimed with good reason that this way the party would be put back into normal functioning. That was why many were taken by surprise when at Tirupati the party President, immediately after the poll results were announced for the ten elected seats in the Working Committee, expressed his anguish that the elected list did not include any woman member nor anybody from among the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. As the party President he was expected to respect the verdict of the poll and not turn an instant critic Moreover, he himself was invested with the power to rectify the imbalance by including the left-out categories in the list of the ten members due to be nominated by the party President.

Instead, the bizarre game of resignations followed, the lead in it having been given by one of the elected known to be closest to him. A totally uncalled for impasse was created by the party President's *obiter dictum*, and then after a month of cogitations, he has come out with a lopsided verdict which instead of clarifying the atmosphere is bound to make things worse To put it briefly, nothing has been done in the eleven months since his becoming the President of the Congress to so undermine the morale of the party as a whole as this patent mishandling of the issue of forming the new Working Committee.

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ONE need not go into a minute examination of the biodata of the new members of the Congress Working Committee. However, it is rather strange that after making so much song and dance about balanced representation, there should be more than one member from the same State. Is not Antony adequately equipped to represent the Kerala point of view and is Karunakaran needed to supplement him—or, more likely, to negate him? Could not Sharad Pawar represent Maharashtra on his own, is Shinde needed to provide the counterpoint? And is Janardan Poojary, the father of the so-called loan *mela* technology, so necessary to reinforce the party's leadership? These and some other questions are bound to trouble many a Congressman. And such misgivings within the party will by no means enhance the position of the party President.

It may of course be argued that the question of the formation of a new Congress Working Committee is an internal matter of the ruling party and should not bother the wider public which is concerned with Narasimha Rao's functioning as the Prime Minister of the country. This is far from tenable as an answer. For one thing, the health of a ruling party is always a matter of interest and concern to the country as a whole, the more so when it does not command a majority in Parliament, thereby imposing upon other parties an added responsibility of scrutinising its capacity to run the government.

Secondly, the formidable agenda of unresolved problems facing the nation demands that there has to be utmost confidence in the capacity of the government in tackling them. Kashmir, Punjab, Assam and the North-East, and Tamil Nadu, apart from the spread of communal bitterness and tension—all are beset with crisis situations of unprecedented magnitude. In tackling them the government has displayed no perspective whatsoever The government's approach betrays a day-labourer's mentality—how to manage somehow till the next morning In such an environment, when the leadership of the ruling party is found to be engrossed in petty rivalries and squabbles and messes up the very simple principles of political functioning, one can easily imagine its deleterious impact on the public mind. Such issues of inconsequence as spending a month of precious time to search for a Working Committee of the ruling party cannot but lead to the sapping of the nation's confidence in the government itself.

One does not feel happy in making sharp criticism of Narasimha Rao. This is not because one should be scared of attacking the Prime Minister of the country, but because he commands a lot of respect by his intellectual qualities and wide political experience of more than four decades. Consciously avoiding the hi-fi flamboyance of some of his predecessors in office and the anarchic waywardness of some others among them, Narasimha Rao earned in the last one year of tension and turbulence, a lot of goodwill and with it, has roused expectations. It is in this background that any lapse into political vacillation—as the Working Committee episode has shown—is bound to provoke both frustration and exasperation. With his congenitally democratic temper, one feels the responsibility to spotlight on any failing on the part of a leader occupying the very seat of power. Not to do so will be doing him an injustice as one would fail in one's obligation to be the watchdog of democracy, no matter however inadequately.

This country expects much more from Narasimha Rao in his capacity as the Prime Minister as also as the President of the ruling party.

May 19 *N.C.*

US Poses Foreign Policy Dilemma for India

MUCHKUND DUBEY

Since the early 1980s, India has been pursuing a well-planned policy of improving and strengthening relations with the United States. There has been a steady progress in this endeavour despite the vicissitudes to which relations between countries like India and the United States are inevitably subjected.

The process acquired a new momentum after the end of the Cold War when the governments of the two countries decided to leave behind the misunderstandings and the reservations of the Cold War years and take a fresh look at the relationship in all its aspects. Consequently, interactions between the two countries at all levels increased sharply. Both countries took unprecedented measures betraying no tinge of the Cold War, to assist each other, and a host of new moves and initiatives were planned for the future, including the now much controversial joint naval exercise.

During the last few weeks, the relations between the two countries have been severely strained because of a series of unilateral actions taken by the US Administration against India. None of these measures are totally unexpected, given the penchant of the US Administration to pursue its interests singlemindedly. However, the quick succession in which they have followed each other and the total insensitivity that they betray to India's goals, policies and priorities, has intrigued and dismayed all those who have put some stakes behind and worked assiduously for the improvement of Indo-US relations.

What has the US Government done to India in the recent weeks? About three weeks ago, we got the news that the United States pressurised Russia to suspend the most crucial part of its long-standing agreement with India for cooperation in space technology, that is, the transfer of rocket engine technology Now in the face of the declared Russian intention not to scrap the deal, the United States Administration has threatened both Russia and India to impose penalties in the form of preventing the transfer to these countries of technologies from the United States and its allies, in space and, maybe, even in other areas

Besides, the United States through a Presidential decree has taken retaliatory action against India under Section 301 of its Trade and Competitiveness Act, and has withdrawn tariff concessions under its Generalised System of Preferences, on pharmaceutical and chemical exports from India. The US Administration has threatened to take further unilateral measures in the field of trade until all US demands for opening up the Indian market for US goods and services and for the protection of US patents, are conceded. Thus both the demand and, consequently, the threat are open-ended.

At the same time, pressure on India to adhere to the discriminatory NPT regime has been stepped up. For the first time, there is a real danger of sanctions being applied against India in order to compel it to accede to NPT. In its editorial on April 28, 1992, the *New York Times,* which on matters like these not too infrequently reflects the position of the US Administration, has called for "undertaking an international embargo on investment, aid and trade, specially in arms and technology". The editorial then very significantly suggests that the obligation imposed on India by the recent changes in world politics, to go global in its political and economic relations "is a source of potential leverage for all countries with an interest in nuclear-free India".

The US action to withdraw the GSP concessions on pharmaceutical and chemical exports from India is clearly unilateral and an unabashed resort to bilateral coercion to serve its national interest. It is an attempt to impose its domestic law on other countries in wanton disregard of its international obligations. The US pressure tactics to compel Russia to renege on its agreement with India to transfer rocket engine technology is even more arbitrary and high-handed. The agreement with Russia does not by any means constitute a violation of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), which incidentally is a fundamentally flawed and discriminatory arrangement among the nuclear "haves" and a few of their allies. It is well known that India has been paying large sums of money for getting its communications, weather, resources and educational satellites lofted into geo-stationary positions. The transfer of cryogenic engine technology will give us the means to launch our vehicles for purely civilian purposes and hopefully to compete with other space powers in the vehicle launching business.

Given the high level of India's space technology, this is a legitimate economic and commercial aspiration. Even if it is conceded that the cryogenic engine is dual-purpose, we cannot accept any agreement the effect of which is to deny access to modern technology, to

(Continued on page 31)

Professor Dubey who is teaching at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, was until recently the Foreign Secretary of India. A slightly abridged version of this article appeared in The Times of India.

A CHINESE VIEW

Indian Reform: The Only Way Out

ZHANG XIAODONG

The following article appeared in the May 4-10, 1992 issue of Beijing Review. *It is being reproduced from that journal in view of its relevance in terms of understanding how Chinese look at India's ongoing economic changes*

—Editor

Prime Minister Rao said that the current economic reform is pursuing the goal of self-reliance in a changed situation. He stressed that India, which falls short of funds and technology, must open its door to absorb foreign capital and technology. The Indian economy can no longer afford to insulate itself from the outside.

India's Narasimha Rao Government, which emerged after unprecedented violent elections last June, has brought political stability to the country. However, the economic upshot of the long-standing political turbulence is severe. By the time Prime Minister Rao took office, foreign debt had amounted to US$ 70 billion and the financial deficit stood at US$ 6-7 billion. The inflation rate surpassed 13 per cent. Rao acknowledged that the economy was in a total mess.

Jamia Agitation

It is a matter of deep regret that the agitation engulfing Jamia Millia Islamia has been protracted largely because of the interference of a junior member of the present government. The political link between the President of the Jamia Students Union and the concerned Minister has paralysed academic life on the campus, besides placing an individual's basic right to dissent in jeopardy. Were it a matter of Muslim opinion, as is being made out by vested interests, the agitation would have spread throughout the country and not been localised to what is essentially a power struggle launched by those who feel threatened by the new appointments within The Vice Chancellor's conduct so far is academically correct and dignified.

We feel that the Prime Minister and the leader of the party, P.V Narasimha Rao, has an obligation to ensure that his Ministers remain out of university affairs and the situation is diffused

Prof Amrik Singh: Nikhil Chakravartty Prof G P Deshpande: Maimoona Mollah, Anuradha Chenoy: Seema Mustafa

Obviously, it was imperative to revamp the country's economic policy. The government, in the first three days of July last year, devalued the rupee twice by 20 per cent, bringing it close to the exchange rate on the free market. New Delhi plans to make the rupee convertible in the world market in three to five years. The devaluation move was designed to stimulate exports and discourage imports.

Another target is to trim budgetary deficit. Last July's budget saw considerable cuts in the administrative expenditure of the Central Government departments, and subsidies for some goods and exports were cancelled. In addition, the tax rates for many luxury consumer goods were raised. These measures have helped reduce the deficit to 6.5 per cent from 8.5 per cent in the gross domestic product of the previous fiscal year.

Most important, a new industrial policy has been adopted. All sectors, with the exception of a few strategic and defence-related departments, are opened to private business. No sanctions are required for building new enterprises or expanding enterprises, except for some commodities. The government has removed restrictions on monopoly and trade introduced in the 1950s, allowing more room for private enterprises to manoeuvre in economic activities. A "memorandum system" has been introduced in state-owned enterprises to reduce administrative interference in their operation. Twenty per cent of shares in profit-making state-owned enterprises will be sold to institutions or individuals. The government allows foreign shares to rise from 40 per cent to 51 per cent in 34 priority sectors. Foreign business can now operate those enterprises whose products are

(Continued on page 35)

Wandering in Space

Some Thoughts on India's Space Programme

V. SIDDHARTHA

On March 24, the core vehicle of ISRO's Advanced Satellite Launch Vehicle (ASLV) plummeted into the Bay of Bengal. Some eight years earlier, the first launch of its forerunner—SLV-3—met a similar fate. Many who had watched both events would have been struck by the difference between the psychological 'ambience' of that time and the contemporary mood. In 1979, the ISRO contrived to varnish the SLV-3 launch failure with the verbal paint of a "partial success"—the words used in the public announcement. Nobody was taken-in. Both the ISRO's effort and the failure invited derisive comments.

In contrast, the terse, clear, no-varnish announcement following the failure of the ASLV-mission is a testimonial both to the self-confidence that the space programme has acquired, and to the maturation of attitudes of Parliament and the public towards advanced-technology enterprises of the ISRO kind—a maturation that emboldened the ISRO to make its announcement in plain language.

We often forget that even thirty years after the space age truly began, the development and regular use of space launch vehicles remains a risky business. We were reminded of this two days after the ASLV failure, on March 26—when a 'work-horse' launch vehicle of the United States—an Altas-Centre—failed. We in India take the fruits of technological enterprises—overwhelmingly borrowed from others in the world who have taken the friendless roads before us—so much for granted, that we rarely get a measure of that sparsely-populated path. The table below provides some measures of the loneliness of the long-distance space-farer and a measure of the high mortality among his early children.

Even among the many well-wishers and admirers of the technical quality and administrative competence of our space programmers, there is a sizeable proportion which still believes the programme to be a cover for a military-oriented missile and satellite programme. Why, they ask, is this programme (and its forebear, the atomic energy programme) so important for us? Why is India in space? When Abdul Kalam, the ex-Project Director of SLV-3, moved from the ISRO to the Defence R&D, it was widely said that the 'cover' had finally been blown. Missiles were what India was really after. All this talk and programme about 'peaceful uses' of outer space was just so much eye-wash.

Is it an eye-wash? The ISRO's programme is wide-open to Parliament. It continues to stand on peaceful legs, which have not genuflected—not yet, at any rate. The ISRO's launch-vehicles are *already too big* for missile application. There is of course a separate substantial missile development programme—in Defence R&D. "But don't tell me the two sets of bright boys (and girls) don't speak to each other." Of course they do. Indeed, the lament of many is that they don't converse a great deal more—but that is another story.

The ISRO's space *applications* programme, on the other hand, has significantly fewer detractors. Communications, television and remote-sensing are services which are benign in their potential. They can be un-benign in their function if we foolishly misuse and mis-apply them. There is, most distressingly, much evidence that we are doing just that in communications and television. Remote-sensing is still too remote except for a

Vehicles	*Total No. of Flights*	*No. of Failures*	*Serial Nos. of failures in the first 10 flights*
Diamant (France)	8	2	4 and 8
Scout (USA)	100 plus	11	1,3,5,6 and 7
Europa (ELDO)	4	4	1,2,3 and 4
Atlas-Centaur (USA)	65	11	2,4 and 6
Titan (USA)	44	8	2,3 and 5
Delta (USA)	178	12	1
Ariane (ESA)	18	4	2 and 5
'N' (Japan)	15	2	5 and 6
Long March (China)	13	2	3 and 8
SLV-3 (India)	4	1	1
ASLV (India)	1	1	1

ESA—European Space Agency

ELDO—European Launcher Development Organisation, precursor to ESA

DATA. Courtesy ISRO

The author, currently with the Defence Research and Development Organisation, was a member of the Systems Planning and Analysis Group of the ISRO.

social collective—of some sort—to harness and use. But with the cost of advanced data handling and image-processing coming down to well-within what the private corporation can afford, the opportunity exists for the private misappropriation of its potential.

The scientific community paid out of the public purse is—to use an ISRO expression—a "bought-out" component of our polity. The events of the past two years within our scientific community must cause alarm. The individual and collective behaviours of the ageing, but hanging-on-for-dear-life, leadership within it are not examples to the younger, more-enlightened, less-afraid segments of the community. *Deja Vu*? Was not something very similar said a decade ago? Indeed it was. What is so saddening is that the un-afraids at the first launch of SLV-3 are the much-afraids at the first launch of ASLV. The paralysing permanence of collective genuflection; of collective abdication; of collective sycophancy is what we should ponder and lament; after all, we can always build another ASLV. ■

Satyajit Ray: His Films, Our Lives

ASHOKE CHATTERJEE

The passing of Satyajit Ray brings to an end an era not only in the history of Indian cinema and of contemporary Bengal, but equally in the lives of so many in his country and beyond—all those for whom his creations have become a part of the fabric of their existence. The feelings of Ray's characters are their own most personal experiences, the images of his camera their own memories and hopes. For those of us whose lives he entered so completely, it has often been difficult to know where Ray left off and where we began. I remember my first encounter with the cinema of Satyajit Ray, almost forty years ago. Not *Pather Panchali*, but *Aparajito*, viewed in a small dark theatre half a world away from home. It was to change my life, by defining for the first time my little space within the universe of man. Like the Biblical assurance, that I had once seen darkly, Ray now brought face to face. In retrospect, every adult commitment I was to make was rooted in Ray's truth, which became one's own.

I was to spend the next decade in the city of the master and to fall clumsily in love with it in something like his way. Ray, or Manikda if one dared familiarity, was the beacon of those years, each marked by another of his works and the inevitable Calcutta polemics on what was great or what was trivial about it, sides joined even before a viewing, just as at football matches at Eden Gardens. If Calcutta was Ray's soul, he was its passion and its addiction. On lucky occasions, one could watch him at work in the ramshackle studios of Tollygunj, from where his vision addressed the world. Ray's booklined study on Biship-Lefroy Road was a place of pilgrimage, as well as of social one-upmanship, if one's comings and goings were noticed by Calcutta's cogniscenti. It was here that important encouragement first came to me for a mission that was to engage me for many years: to document the life and work of another genius, the dancer Shanta Rao. Later, his own favourite work, *Charulata*, became for Shanta what so many of his films have become for many around the world: an expression of personal values most deeply held—each of Satyajit Ray's films linked inextricably with some drama of actual living: a designer in Los Angeles reliving through *Aranyer Din Ratri* the dilemma of her own existence, an executive in Bombay stunned by the uncomfortable relevance of *Pratidwandi* and *Janaranya* family in Milan for whom the story of Apu and Durga in the *Trilogy* was an experience to be carefully shared with each growing child. Even when he was less successful, Ray left legacies of supreme importance, as in his documentary on Balasaraswati, the only evidence we now have of a genre of Bharata Natyam which has nothing to do with showmanship. Watching these two great Indians at work together at Gemini Studios was to touch the essence of quality: the uncompromising pursuit of excellence by creative spirits incapable of hype or exhibitionism.

Awards, tributes and film scholarship Ray received in abundance. Yet no analysis of his technique can explain the true nature of his poetic imagination. It was Ray's empathy that made him one with his craft, with his audiences and with the lives he touched and changed in such a special way. It came from his ability to love, and to express and share that love. It was this that made Satyajit Ray so special. He gave utterance to what seemed beyond words, giving voice to the deepest thoughts and longings of his people. Generations to come will know through Ray what it was to be an Indian and a citizen of our times. To have lived in his time and in his India is a privilege which the passing of Satyajit Ray no longer permits us to take for granted. ■

For a Sustainable Development of NGOs

VIBODH PARTHASARATHI

After the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1989, nations agreed that the goal of the Earth Summit would be to set all countries on the path of Sustainable Development. While this phrase has become the buzzword among academics, technocrats, governmental officials and activists the world over, confusion has set in because of the multiplicity of its interpretation.

As one would expect, each interpretation would depend upon how the crisis pertaining to the ecology of the earth is perceived. While the South views the global environmental damage as the doing of the North, the North in turn states that things may have been much better if the domestic economies of the South had been managed efficiently. Therefore, to the leaders from the industrialised North, Sustainable Development signifies the growth and expansion of their economies within certain ecological limits so as to keep the planet healthy and inhabitable for the future generations. For the South, Sustainable Development means, to quote from *The Report of the South Commission*, "the need for compatibility between growth and the preservation of the environment and to warn against a narrow-minded and short-sighted approach to development and economic modernisation".

However, at the Earth Summit there is yet another "block" which seeks to voice its opinion—the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) from the world over. These are institutions which had hope for the future, as, it was on the "other" side—a forum which was to be the true voice of the people. Ideologically, the NGOs were considered as a loose collective of critical questioning and constructive opposition to the all-powerful state and corporate interests. Their efforts were directed at breaking the hitherto strong North-South, East-West divide to unite all potential forces truly concerned with the present and future quality of life on earth.

The author, a free-lance journalist, is an environmental activist.

The real colours of this so-called NGO community have been reflected during the multi-crore, multi-conference countdown towards the UNCED. For instance, while the above mentioned phrase of Sustainable Development is still undergoing countless re-interpretations, it is sad that most of the NGOs the world over have blindly taken to this buzzword. Instead of drawing up an alternative to the UNCED, both in terms of spirit and substance, they have not only joined the Rio bandwagon but also centered their arguments around this holy phrase. Indeed, most NGOs see the Earth Summit as a long-awaited platform to prove who is the Greenest of all!

In India the drive towards the Earth Summit has attracted the so-called NGOs ranging from nascent one-person "groups" to obscure youth women organisations. This drives into oblivion the handful of NGOs sincerely engaged in working towards, or at least attempting, an alternative human ecology. What is worse is the fact that both the government and NGO delegations to the UNCED—that's what the once activists of the latter have reduced themselves to—have turned a deaf ear towards the voice of the people's movements in as far as their expectations, if any, from the UNCED are concerned. This is most shameful as it comes from the people involved in these mass movements—whose focus ranges from "green" ecological to "red" labour struggles, and from "blue" anti-nuclear campaigns to the all-encompassing truly feminist groups—that these "activists" have been able to launch themselves into the Hall of Fame of global NGOs. The latter is a reference to the proposed International NGO Forum as part of the '92 Global Forum for the Independent Sectors' to be inaugurated in the Flamengo Park in Rio on June 1.

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THE NGOs themselves were more than willing to be present in the UNCED process, most of all at Rio itself. This is due to the fact that billions of dollars will definitely emerge as the primary, if not only concrete, spin-off from the Earth Summit. Under the banners of "our common future" and "save the planet", the first stage will be financial commitments to the "cause" at Rio itself, and in the second stage as aid packages or soft loans in the following time periods. For Indian NGOs this seems to be rather irresistible, as, after the SAP programme by the WB it has become possible for the latter to directly fund NGOs in India, as is being done in certain other Third World countries.

This is nothing but a definite manifestation of the NGOs involved in the Earth Summit having been co-opted by the state—individually or as a "sector". This intellectual appropriation of the NGOs by the state has been either through their respective national governments or by international regimes in the guise of a global transnational government such as the UNDP, World Bank, UNEP and, of course, the UNCED. Few people know that the '92 Global Forum' was initially funded by the UNDP, and is currently sponsored by an arm of the UNCED—the International Facilitating Committee—while sincere efforts are on to look for private sector sponsors. The very fact that the UNCED has a high profile NGO Liaison Unit goes to reflect the extent to which the UNCED think-tank has gone to woo these so-called NGOs. It is unfortunate that many NGOs who had a genuine commitment to the issue have fallen for the trap and together with the other ones have agreed to be collectively christened as the NGO Sector as far as the Earth Summit is concerned. Thus, first we had the government/public sector, as a quasi-opposition developed in India the corporate/private sector, and now as an Opposition to both (at least that was the spirit during its genesis) has emerged towards Rio, we have the NGO/Independent sector.

Journalism Fellowship

The 1992-93 Journalism Education Trust fellowship is now open. Any working journalist is qualified to apply. The chosen candidate will be able to pursue a research project under the M.Phil programme of the Centre for Development Studies at Trivandrum, leading up to a JNU degree. The Fellowship provides Rs. 1200 a month for up to 16 months for those who wish to complete the degree course plus a contigency grant of Rs. 3000 for books and travel.

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Completed applications should reach the Centre not later than May 25, 1992. The course commences on September 1. All applications will be processed and final selections made by the Centre.

T. J. S. George
Authorised Trustee, J.E.T

The UNCED, on its part, has done well to maintain in the eyes of most of us the facade of NGO presence right throughout the countdown to the Earth Summit (Prep. Coms., etc.) as well as in Rio itself. Such an act of bringing in the "other" voice is essential for any regime if it wants to appear democratic and achieve universal acceptance. In the specific context of Rio, to create an illusion that the Earth Summit was a product of years of effort at the grassroots level, and that the UNCED is sincere in its efforts as validated by among others, the NGOs, it is of critical importance to incorporate NGOs from the world over. To create this mirage and win over the opposition from within, the international elite with the pretext of global environmentalism UNCED coined the magic word Sustainable Development—a carrot which most NGOs failed to resist.

Such semantics combined with a dominant media rhetoric, leaves many questions unanswered. While using the phrase Sustainable Development the questions to ask are: Sustainable vis-a-vis what and, Development for whom? Is the UNCED for the further development of the North's neo-colonial hold over the South, this time under the garb of "Our Common Future"? Or, to sustain the increasing marginalisation of natural resources by the governments in the South from their people? Or, to encourage the Sustainable Development of the NGOs towards socio-political inactivity? Surely, the Earth Summit at Rio will prove it, one way or the other. ■

Lessons From Stockmarket Scam

ARVIND N. DAS

Two hours of frenetic trading on the last day of February sent Bombay Stock Exchange Sensitive Index (BSE Sensex) soaring from 2830.9 to 3017.7 as brokers and bankers chased the chimera of the brave new world promised by the Budget Shortly after that, M.J. Pherwani, Chairman of the National Housing Bank (NHB), a fully-owned subsidiary of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) pronounced: "The present boom in the market is the beginning of an economic miracle." The Finance Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, added to the mood of optimism in the quickly decontrolled share market by saying that "the market had to be freed from too much policing and a daddy-knows-best attitude".

The Sensex soared to 4467.32 on April 22 and the somewhat feeble attempt of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to tame the frenzied brokers failed to neutralise the superstitious fervour of speculators. It looked like a never-ending bonanza. Those who forecast that the Sensex would touch 10,000 by the turn of the century appeared to be unduly conservative: many predicted that the figure would be crossed by the end of the year itself.

Today, Pherwani's miracle has turned gilt-edged securities into a scam. The CBI is policing stock-brokers and bankers. And the Big Brother in the Reserve Bank, if not the best-knowing daddy in the government, is watching as the financial institutions, banks and brokers seek to extricate each other from a massive mess. In the meantime, the Sensex has plunged to nearly the same level as it was at the close of the Budget day and sustained market intervention by the government agencies, a series of regulatory measures and reimposition of control mechanisms are striving to prop up stock prices. There are indications of massive fraud, criminal malfeasance, banking default and private misuse of public funds. The Finance Minister himself, a little more chastened than 75 days ago, has had to admit that there has been a "systems failure in the banking industry".

There is, understandably, a lot of effort being made to restrict the investigation into the securities scam to mere scratching the surface. It was in fact argued right when the scandal broke that since the concerned bullish broker had paid the State Bank of India (SBI) the Rs 600 crore or so that he owed the bank, the matter should be dropped in a spirit of "forgive and forget".

Apart from the fact that later revelations show that the scam was not limited to one bank, an interesting legal question arises in this context. It needs to be answered as to who should be the beneficiary of the profits made from illegally acquired resources even after the original sum is returned to its rightful owner. In this case, the Rs 600 crore was surely used for speculation and massive gain by the broker. Now even if the money has been returned to the SBI—it is another matter that the refund itself has evidently been carried out through a series of illegalities—does the gain from speculation continue to remain with the perpetrators of the illegality?

The need to investigate and identify the factors that led to such illegalities amounting to a "banking systems failure" has been emphasised. However, what has not been as cleanly acknowledged is the need to fix responsibility for the "systems failure" in the same manner as Justice M.C. Chagla had done when he investigated a relatively much smaller-scale misuse of funds of the Life Insurance Corporation by the Mundhra concerns. The scam has both a criminal and a political dimension as the banking sector in India is still not autonomous of the government. Even the full implementation of the recommendations of the Narasimham Committee will not enable the banking sector to work against the overall political will. In any case, the recommendations have not even been substantially implemented as yet. In the mean time, major banks—Indian and foreign—and financial institutions including a fully owned subsidiary of the RBI have blatantly violated the RBI directives issued in July 1991 on framing suitable investment policies to ensure that operations in securities are conducted in tune with acceptable (read, honest) business practices.

The securities scam involving thousands of crores of public funds has brought to light several other aspects apart from the issues of criminal liability and political culpability. It has also highlighted the enormous arrogance of the major speculators which had led them to act in defiance of SEBI and use public resources of private gain in the most blatant manner where only cupidity has matched the stupidity of those who hold public moneys in sacred trust.

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IT has also a much wider significance. It has revealed that the boom in the share market is a reflection more of unbridled speculation rather than of healthy capital accumulation which can be used for productive purposes. It is significant that the boom has coincided with a period of economic downturn, industrial decline, stagflation and little new investment in productive assets. There has been trade largely in old scrips and that too at such a frantic pace, without critical consideration, that even the equity of sick companies has been bartered at enormously high prices. To take just one example, shares of a company with negative book value of Rs 207 shot up during this period from a level of Rs 120 to Rs 750! It was as good a case as any in the much maligned public sector of good money chasing bad.

There has been a positive development too in a manner of speaking. In duration of a few months, the total investor population of India burgeoned to 150 lakhs and there were estimates that it would swell to 400 lakhs by 1995. This, of course, also means that many, many investors are switching from gold and land and preferring investment in stocks. This can be a healthy trend provided their investment is protected and their asset preference is safeguarded by those in whom they have reposed their trust. Since, among other factors, the lopsided price-earning ratios of Indian scrips is unlikely to attract a flood of foreign investment, the fate of Indian industrialisation is dependent in large measure on the confidence of the small investor.

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This confidence can be maintained not by promoting the superstition of speculation but by realistic and effective fiscal and banking policies. For instance, the securities scam should serve finally to lay to rest the unwarranted assumption that lending to the 'priority sector'—agriculture rural development, etc.—is more risky than advancing credit to well-heeled speculators. Studies of banking have repeatedly demonstrated that the oxen financed under IRDP have proved to be more bankable than the bulls of Bombay.

The scam should also teach the lesson that it is not a mere attack of economic indigestion curable by liquidating uneconomic ventures. Instead, unless urgent remedial action is taken—and not only by keeping the market up artificially so as to off-load public sector shares at prices high enough to meet the ways and means constraints of the Finance Ministry the scam could turn out to be the first symptom of a wasting fever which can debilitate the whole nation, deprive it of its productive strength by turning accumulation into speculation and aggravate the resource crunch.

At the moment, however, it appears that instead of taking appropriate lessons, measures are being improvised through the agency of the RBI and CBI and are being focussed on the symptoms. There is little probing diagnosis and no surgery to get to the root of the disease. The cry is for economic reform, but the government is instead holding out a handful of palliatives. While some think that all will be well if only the financial institutions buy a sufficient number of stocks, others continue to labour under the superstition that when you buy common stocks, you buy the future, if not also the present.

The substitution of social rationality by economic theology leads inexorably to fiscal superstition. It is necessary to rise above such a counter-productive regression to shape policies which suit the concrete realities of India. The price for not doing that may be enormous and the windfall gains cornered by a few favoured speculators may entail a cost for the future of India itself. ■

(Courtesy: *The Times of India*)

Uruguay Round of GATT Negotiations

Threat to Consumer Sovereignty in Third World

SUDHA SACHDEVA-DHAR

"An unprecedented power grab is underway within the Uruguay Round negotiations of a new version of the General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)",[1] said the noted American consumer advocate, Ralph Nader, to 500 consumer activists and officials at the Thirteenth World Congress of the International Organisation of Consumers Union (IOCU) in July 1991.

Being critical of the IOCU for its pussy-footing role in supporting the general thrust of the GATT, Nader criticised the GATT proposals in the area of intellectual property, "which call upon all countries to adopt the US style patent, copyright and trademark laws". He said, "These changes, as proposed, would strengthen the monopoly power of multinational companies in high tech fields such as pharmaceutical and chemicals, drive up the prices of drugs, etc., for the Third World consumers and devastate the Third World's fledgling high technology companies. For the Third World, even more than for the industrialised countries, nothing less, than the chance of economic self-determination--the ability of citizens to exert control over their economy--is at stake in the GATT negotiations."

These statements appear almost prophetic in the light of the draft proposals presented by Arthur Dunkel, the Director-General of the GATT in December 1991 and the likely impact these proposals would have on the consumers in the Third World. The Dunkel proposals have been made in response to the wide negotiating mandate that the Uruguay Round had adopted, incorporating several new areas.

For the first time in the Uruguay Round negotiations, the GATT took up three new areas, namely,--TRIPs (Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights), TRIMs (Trade Related Investment Measures) and Trade in Services ostensibly aimed at increasing the strength of multinational corporations (MNCs) in the global economy. The inclusion of these new areas would have inimical consequences for the developing countries for they threaten the existence of domestic industries in these countries. An immediate impact of this nature of displacement of domestic industries in the developing countries would be on the consumers in these countries. This is because larger access opportunities for the MNCs in the markets of developing countries being the ultimate objective of the negotiations,[2] the decisions arrived at in the negotiations have a direct bearing on the nature of markets, nature of goods and services allowed to be produced both by the indigenous and foreign manufacturers, the channels of distribution and promotion adopted, the terms of availability and the price at which these can be purchased by the consumers in these economies.

The author is a Lecturer in Consumer Economics, Department of Community Resource Management and Extension, Lady Irwin College, New Delhi.

According to the consumer sovereignty model, the 'consumer is the king' in an economy. He is the cause and ultimate of all production in the economy. Goods and services are produced to satisfy consumer wants. He casts his money vote in favour of those goods and services that satisfy his needs and wants most, and does not cast his money vote for those that do not meet his requirements at a given point of time. Through this process, the consumer has the very important role of commanding and guiding the kind of goods and services that are to be produced in an economy for his consumption.

In reality, however, consumer choice is never autonomous and nor are the consumers completely sovereign. Forces other than consumer demand determine the kind of goods and services being produced in an economy, their quantity and the prices at which they are made available to the consumer. If the consumer was actually sovereign and all production was taking place for satisfying consumer wants and needs leading to consumer welfare, the need for consumer movements would not have arisen.

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AN elaboration of the position of the consumer in the economy is provided by John Kenneth Galbraith. According to Galbraith, "the initiative in deciding what is to be produced comes not from the sovereign consumer, who through the market, issues the instructions that bend the productivity mechanism to his ultimate will; but rather it comes from the 'great producing organisations' which reach forward to control the markets that it is presumed to serve and beyond, to bend the consumer to its needs."[3] These great producing organisations alluded to above are nothing but the MNCs. With these conglomerates spreading their wings for global markets to achieve maximisation of profits, emergence of well-established distribution channels, growth of advertising and media industries, increasing participation and control of the MNCs even in these industries for sales promotion has only resulted in bending the customers to the needs of the market. This is achieved by generating demand through the creation of felt needs for the goods and services produced and promoted by these corporations. The goods and services produced by these corporations are not always the ones that satisfy consumer needs the most, hence the consumer's interest gets pushed to the back seat. These tendencies are only going to get further strengthened and reinforced through the pressures exerted on the developing countries in the GATT negotiations.

The operation of the MNCs implies globalisation of the production and distribution mechanisms in the developing countries. Implications of this trend towards globalisation include the following[4]:

1. The primary objective of the MNCs is to maximise profits by exploiting the markets they operate in. They do this by entering into newer markets either through equity participation or through sale of technology. In both cases, the objective is to reap as much benefit as they can by charging high royalty payments for a maximum possible duration or entering into collaborations for use of their 'brand names' and 'trade marks'.

   Profit maximisation is also achieved through their participation in low tech areas of the consumer goods industry either through equity participation or with technical collaborations, and providing not the 'best' or the 'latest' technology. Further advantages are sought to be reaped by the MNCs through participation in franchise agreements with the small scale entrepreneurs of the host countries. These processes make the brands of the MNCs available in the markets of developing countries at a much lower cost of production, given the cheap labour of the small scale producer. High sales of these brands leads to a large outflow of profits from the host countries
2. Since the ultimate aim of all the MNCs is market access and the desire to command either total monopoly or a near monopoly position is the primary motive, these conglomerates also use high promotion expenditures to promote their brands. Gradually, the services like advertising also get transnationalised not only through equity participation but also by the fact that the MNCs are the largest users of this industry.

   Advertisements being the links between the producers and consumers for promoting products, the mass media as carriers of these advertisements also face indirect control of the MNCs as these corporations are normally the top buyers of media time.

   As a result, a situation arises where the MNCs gradually exercise control, either directly or indirectly, over the resources of the developing countries. The allocation of critical resources such as finance, raw material, land and manpower in these countries, therefore, get determined by the production priorities of these corporations and not by the development needs of a nation: its people and consumers.

This process has implications that are not just economic but are socio-economic and socio-cultural.

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THE tendencies arising out of globalisation, described above, were witnessed in India in the previous decade. The post-1983-84 period, in particular, witnessed an unprecedented increase in the number of new products and brands of consumer goods available in the market. This phase offered 12 brands of convenience food (including instant noodles, instant soups instant food mixes, jams, sauces, soft drinks concentrates), multiple brands of electronics, branded toys manufactured in technical collaboration, for example, Barbie dolls and Leo Toys, branded textiles like 'Van Heusen' shirts, multiple brands of consumer durables like washing machines, kitchenettes, cars and other automobiles, designer 'floor tiles' and wall tiles, all manufactured in collaboration with the MNCs or their affiliates.

The rapid introduction of new products and brands was also supported by the fact these corporations engaged in their production were also the top advertisers in the mass media. The billings of the avertising industry have been concentrated to a large extent with these corporations. For instance, during 1976-84, foreign controlled companies (FCCs)[5] in India accounted for more than 55 per cent of the gross billings of the advertising industry. Hindustan Lever, the all-time top advertiser alone accounted for 12-15 per cent of the billings. These trends have only strengthened further in the years that have followed.

Top buyers of TV time are also the MNCs and their affiliates and constitute a considerable share in the total billings of this important mass media. Thus, an increasing number of foreign brands have found an entry into the daily consumption basket of Indian consumers. The extent of their participation in the daily lives of Indian consumers is illustrated in the commentary enclosed in Annexure-I. The apparent effect of this domination by the MNCs, either directly or through their affiliates, has been the promotion of a consumerist life-style and the introduction of a global consumer culture which was not in conformity with the developmental framework of the economy.

From the consumer's point of view, the implications of the above process are enormous. The more important of these are:

- With the emergence of monopolies or near monopolies in the consumer goods market, prices of the commodities get affected in a manner unfavourable to the consumers.
- The emergence of monopolies results in an increase in Restrictive Trade Practices (RTPs) and Unfair Trade Practices (UTPs), over which the consumers have no control.
- With an increasing stress on consumerist life-style, the consumers are forced to purchase goods and services that are 'conspicuous' in nature[6], that is, those that do not represent their real needs and demand, but the demand for which gets generated through media images, sales promotion techniques and the demonstration effect of "keeping up with the Joneses". The net result is a drain of the consumers' pocket because goods and services required to satisfy his real needs are substituted by goods purchased for frivolous consumption and the returns from the money spent are low.[7]
- Consumers in developing countries can get affected due to a large participation of the MNCs in their markets also because of the uncertainty that might arise in the domestic availability and prices of goods as the MNCs tend to replace the domestic products with their own brands. Later, after establishing their brands in the market, they may choose to withdraw or restrict the production and distribution of these goods and leave the consumer in an uncertain situation charging a price not in relation to the product attributes.

The above trends of monopolies, increasing prices, non-availability or threatened availability, debasing of local production and distribution systems and rise in RTPs and UTPs would only get further reinforced if the proposals made by the GATT Director General as the Draft Final Text of the Uruguay Round negotiations, and which have, by and large, been endorsed by the developed countries, are accepted.

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IN the July 1991 G-7 Summit, the position of the developed countries in regard to the Uruguay Round negotiations was made more explicit. It was suggested in the Summit that the G-7 expected the developing countries to come forward in a big way to cooperate in formulating the agreements in the areas of markets access, agriculture, services and intellectual property rights in such a way that goods and services in the developed countries continue to find ready market in the developing countries.

The view that developing countries may have to rely on imports more than their domestic production has gained further credence in the TRIPs negotiations. In these negotiations developed countries have proposed that the conditions of working of a patent, that is, utilising the patent to set up production units, in a country granting patent should be altered. Instead of setting up production units, it has been proposed that importation of the product granted patent protection should be taken as fulfilling the condition of working. This condition implies that when a developing country grants patent protection to a foreign patentee, the latter would not be obliged to transfer his technology to the developing countries. These proposals are, therefore, aimed at depriving developing countries access to sophisticated technology which they require for their industrialisation. Instead there would be: (i) a tendency towards import of the products incorporating the latest technology, and (ii) an increasing number of foreign collaboration agreements entered into for promotion of foreign brand names and trade marks, in low priority consumer goods.

Suggested decontrol of foreign investment under TRIMs will bring in a much larger participation of the MNCs in the developing countries on terms that would favour the foreign investors more than that in the past. Through this process there would be strengthening of the tussle for brand monopolies which would give rise to a larger dependence on product promotion through advertising and not innovation as a technique for larger market shares. The result will be strengthening of foreign monopolies which would bring with it high prices for the consumers.

The quality of life of consumers in an economy is determined by their access to basic amenities like safe food, safe drinking water, sanitation, education and medical services, and price at which the services are offered to the consumers. In India, these basic amenities are provided by the state and hence the consumers can avail of these services at an affordable price. Further, consumers also have an access to easy credit through nationalised banks and security of risk converge through easy terms of insurance, again because these crucial financial services are state-owned. Participationof the MNCs in these crucial areas of services, which the GATT is seeking to promote, and their terms and conditions of supplying the same may not be suitable to the needs and requirements of the common man in the developing countries. The provision of these services is likely to suffer from the 'elite bias' given their high price. With increasing consumerism on the one hand and commercialisation of services on the other, the consumers would get totally marginalised and the possibility of affording a minimal decent life would get out of the reach of the common man in the country.

In agriculture, the proposed GATT rules aim at the reduction of subsidies, both to the producers as well as the consumers. This twin removal of subsidies would affect the poor in particular since this would have an adverse effect on the prices and availability of the agricultural produce. The reduction of subsidies would also constrict the flow of the benefits of Public Distribution System to the comman man. Again, freer global trade in agriculture, yet another objective of the Dunkel proposals, may not necessarily mean that the grains of right quality are available at the right price to consumers in the developing countries.

Hence, the overall developmental goals of the economy would be under the threat of getting totally submerged under the bandwagon of global consumerism strengthened through the provisions of the GATT. The implications of these changes, aimed at bringing about by a more liberal participation of the MNCs in the economy, would be far-reaching. Apart from causing displacement of local production and distribution causing larger unemployment, this process would add the additional dimension of distortion through its capacity to influence people's aspirations and life-styles, and the value systems of the invaded societies as a whole. Tensions between the different strata of society would increase on account of changes in the life-styles and the demonstration effect in the range of products and brands in the consumption baskets of the consumers. These inimical consequences would get confounded by the inevitable rise in unemployment, as mentioned earlier.

The implications of such a powerful process of soico-economic and socio-cultural changes on consumers resulting from the operation of the MNCs in the developing countries were recognised in several international fora during the past few decades. An important initiative was taken following this by the United Nations through adoption of the Guidelines for Consumer Protection' in 1985.[8] The objective of the code was to help the developing countries control the marketing practices of the MNCs.[9] A complete negation of these initatives are being witnessed in the GATT which is why the threat to the developing countries is even greater at the present juncture.

Where do we go from here

Given the serious nature of implications, the need of the hour is that consumers come forward in an organised and active manner to decide what is the kind, variety and quality of the goods and services they want to be made available to them for consumption, at what price, and under what terms and conditions of availability.

The current GATT negotiations as we have discussed above, can be viewed as an attempt to constrict consumer sovereignty. Instead of the consumer deciding about his consumption basket, the MNCs are sought to be given the priomordial role to decide what the society should consume. In this context, it is imperative for the consumers to inform and educate themselves of the issues involved and the implications on their future life-styles and the resource-use pattern of their societies.

Annexure-I

A Commentary on the extent of the presence of transnational brands in the daily lives of an Indian consumer

The penetration and participation of multinational corporations into our lives continues unabated throughout the day. It begins in the morning when we wake up with a morning cup of **Brooke Bond** of **Lipton** tea, served with Cadbury's **Bournvita Biscuits** or **Tasty Bites**, **Marie** and **Bourbons** from Britannia. Tea may be prepared by plugging in a **Philips** kettle, or in a **Borosil** corning kettle on a gas stove lighted by **Wimco** matches. This is followed by the brushing of our teeth with **Colgate, Close Up, Forhans, Ponds** or **Cibaca** tooth pastes spread on tooth brushes of the same brands. Using **Palmolive Erasmic** or an **Old Spice** shaving cream and a brush, the process of shaving is completed with the use of **Erasmic, Wiltech** or a **7 O' Clock Edgeteck** blades and razors from **Willman** or **Erasmic** followed by an after-shave lotion from **Colgate Palmolive, Erasmic** or **Old Spice.**

The choices available for bathing soaps range from the **Lux, Rexona, Liril** and **Pears** of the Hindustan Lever to **Dream Flower, Cold Cream, Herbal** and **Sandal** soaps of Ponds. We also have the choice of a beauty bath with **Palmolive** or **Lux Supreme** and for a complete antiseptic bath we have **Dettol** toilet soap.

Again, the choices for a head bath are also no less varied, ranging from the **Sunsilk Egg Shampoo, Sunsilk Shampoo with Conditioner, Sunsilk Amla** to **Halo, Ponds, Palmolive** and **Naturelle Herbal Shampoo**. For stubborn dandruff we have **Clinic Special** for help. The Operation Clean-up is completed in the morning with a sprinkle of **Ponds Dream Flower, Ponds Sandal** or a **Cuticura** talc, not to forget the option of **Liril** as well; coupled with the rub of **Vaseline Hair Tonic** or **Brylcream** in the hair.

How can we forget the special options for the babies who are bathed with the special **Johnsons Baby Soap** and massaged with **Johnsons Baby Oil** and sprinkled with the delicate smelling **Johnsons Baby Powder** specially manufactured for them. There is also a provision of **Johnsons Baby Lotion** to protect their delicate skin and **Johnsons Ear Buds** to clean their delicate ears.

Feeding the babies with **Nespray, Lactogen, Lactodex** supplemented with **Farex** and **Cerelac** and leaving them to play with **Barbie Dolls** and **Leo Mattel Toys**, we are ready for breakfast dressed in **Haiku Collection** of sarees and dress materials, or **Cezari** collection of suitings from Bombay Dyeing and **Van Heusan** and **Benetton** shirts accompanied by shoes and sandals from Bata—**North Star** and **Power Jogger** to name a few.

On the breakfast table again, we are served **Britannia Bread** toasted in a **Philips** toaster with a spread of **Kissan** jams of a savoury sandwich with a spread of **Maggie Chilli-Garlic, Maggie Hot and Sweet** sauce. This is, of course, accompanied by **Britannia** cakes and biscuits, all of which is washed down by a glass of cold coffee made in **Nescafe Shake** using **Nescafe Instant Coffee** or a cup using the **Rich Bru Instant** from Brooke Bond prepared with the **Every Day** dairy whitener from the Nestle's. Packing **Maggie 2-minute Noodles** for lunch with a dash of **Maggie** or **Kissan** sauces and ketchups, we are ready to move out for work made up in the latest cosmetics from **Ponds** and **Max Factor** and perfumes from **Charlie**. The array of face cream and lotions available is also not small ranging from the **Charmis All Purpose Cream** to **Nivea Lotion, Ponds Cold Cream** to **Cleartone, Clearasil** and **Fair and Lovely**.

We leave for work riding a **Maruti Suzuki, Hero Honda** or a **Yamaha 150**, or commuting in buses which use tyres made by **Dunlop, Ceat** or **Goodyear**.

We reach office punctually with the aid of a **Citizen** or an **Allwyn Seiko** wristwatch, wearing sparkling white clothes laundered with the **Super Rin** washing soap, or with **High Power Surf** of **Sunlight** washing powders. The clothes are laundered in **Savior** washing machines and treated with **Robin** fabric whitener for a sparkling whiteness. Of course, these clothes are stitched on a **Singer Sewing Machine**.

Reaching the office in a high-rise building with the help of an **Otis** elevator, we slump on the seats under the cool breeze of a fan from **GEC** or **Crompton Greaves** Sitting under the lights of **Philips** bulbs and tubes, we do the writing using a **Sheffers, Parker** or a **Cross** pen, the symbols of the elite. Working on the typewriters of **Remington Rand** and computers that depend on **IBM**, we drink the cold water from a **Voltas** water-cooler to quench our thirst. We may even enjoy the cool fizz of the products of **Pepsi** till such time that **Coca Cola** does not make its re-entry. Smoking cigarettes manufactured by the **ITC** we may go out for lunch in one of the hotels managed by the same company.

The evening is spent relaxing to the music provided by a **Philips** sound system and refreshing with a cup of **Cadbury's Drinking Chocolate**. Children take **Bournvita, Complan, Horlicks** or **Glucon** before going to play eating **Cadbury's Chocolates, Gems** or **Eclairs**. Here again, they can choose from **Cadbury's Milk Chocolates, Double Decker, 5 Star, Chocolate Pops**. They can even choose from the range provided by **Nestle's**.

Preparation for dinner starts with the grinding of masalas in a **Philips** mixer grinder, using 'Dalda' of Hindustan Lever or **Vital** of Britannia as the cooking medium. For the desserts what can be better than **Brown and Polson** Custard Powder and **Rex** Jelly served with tinned fruits from **Kissan**.

At dinner we switch on our **Philips** or **BPL-Sanyo** television to watch a programme sponsored by the makers of **Maggie, Vicks** and **Rin**, to name only a few. Retiring on a bed on a mattress and pillow made by **Dunlop** covered with a sheet and pillow covers from

Bombay Dyeing, we often resort to the help of a **Digene, Vocacil, Strepsils, Vicks-Action 500**, or a **Disprin** for a peaceful sleep. ■

NOTES

1. See, Mehta, S. Pradeep, "GATT Workshop: Free Trade Benefits Elude Consumers", *The Economic Times* New Delhi, July 10, 1991.
2. The GATT Director General, Arthur Dunkel, had indicated That the "philosophy of GATT is ....about market openings". In the global economy where the MNCs hold the key, it is quite clear who would be the eventual beneficiaries of the "market opening" that the GATT stands for.
3. See, Goden Leland J., and Lee, Stewart M., *Economics for Consumers*, seventh edition, 1977.
4. This point and the following discussion is based on the findings of a paper prepared at the Indian Institute of Public Administration for the project Impact of Multinational Corporations on India's Position in the International Division of Labour", under the Indo-Dutch Programme on Alternatives in Development. For details, see Sachdeva, Sudha, 'Advertising in India: Some Characteristics and Trends, **Working Paper No. 17, Corporate Studies Group,** Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi, 1988.
5. Foreign controlled companies were defined, in the study being referred to here, as those companies in which the voting stock of foreign equity was 10 per cent or more in 1984.
6. *Ibid*. The following criteria were included in the operational definition of a commodity of conspicuous consumption in the Indian context. These were: (i) degree of essentiality; (ii) the comparative prices in relation to other unadvertised brands or natural substitutes available; (iii) the level of status associated and the resultant tendencies to emulate; (iv) the life-style it promoted--bloomers or otherwise, and the real consumer need; (v) the level of avoidable chemicals used; (vi) values associated with materialism, it was capable of promoting; and (vii) the nature of the products, whether alien or not, to the Indian life-style. Any commodity satisfying one or more of these criteria was considered as commodity of conspicuous consumption. For more details, see Sachdeva, Sudha, 'Role **of TV Advertisements in Conspicuous Consumption** unpublished dissertation, Department of Community Resources Management and Extension, Lady Irwin College, 1986.
7. The underlying principle of consumer welfare is that for every penny spent by a consumer in the market, the consumer gets a fair return only if he gets the right quality and quantity of goods and services needed by him at the right prices.
8. Mercial, Patrizio, "Consumer Protection and the United Nations, *Journal of World Trade Law*, vol.20, no. 2, April 1986.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 208, although the definite text did not mention "transnational corporations", the Guidelines were clearly intended to confer greater legitimacy to national and international campaigns towards stricter control of the MNCs.

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Threat to Employment

JAYA JAITLY and SURENDRA MOHAN

Dignified and gainful employment of every adult individual should have been the cornerstone of all our development policies. Instead, our industrial policies threw people out of work. Our planned economy seems to have planned for unemployment as can be seen by these figures of the extent of unemployment:

End of 1st Plan	53 lakhs
End of 2nd Plan	71 lakhs
End of 3rd Plan	96 lakhs
End of 4th Plan	171 lakhs
End of 5th Plan	221 lakhs
End of 6th Plan	249 lakhs
End of 7th Plan	310 lakhs
Currently	355-370 lakhs

These figures hardly reveal the truth since they reflect only the registered unemployed in the mere 800 employment exchanges we have all over the country. Hundreds of millions among the landless cultivators, the tribals and others in the informal sectors of the economy hardly register in these offices.

Hence a more realistic figure would be much higher. The rate of growth of employment in the seventies was 2.8 per cent. It declined in the eighties to 1.7 per cent, having slid down to 1.5 per cent in 1982-83 to 1987-88. In the agricultural sector, this rate was only 0.95 per cent during the latter period. Full employment including the absorption of the backlog and the new entrants of around 90 million in this decade requires an average 3.5 per cent increase in employment during the decade. The growth rate of existing employment per annum or even less would continue to add massively to the number of the unemployed. Additionally, five crores could also be added to it because of the policies dictated by the IMF/World Bank.

It is significant in this connection that while the proportion of the usual, that is the annual unemployment to workforce increased from 2.77 to 3.77 per cent in 1983 to 1987-88, the percentage of daily unemployment fell from 8.25 to 6.09, thus emphasising that underemployment was changing into open unemployment in substantial numbers.

Jaya Jaitly is a political activist working among rural artisans in the unorganised sector.
Surendra Mohan is a senior leader of the Janata Dal.
This paper was presented at recent national seminar on the new economic policy.

While employment in the much maligned public sector went up by three per cent in 1975-85, employment in the private sector remained virtually stagnant. Automation, mechanisation, computerisation in areas where they displaced rather than added workers and heavy investment in capital intensive projects resulted in the spending of a hundred thousand crores to actually reduced 70,000 jobs since the liberalisation of the eighties in the private sector.

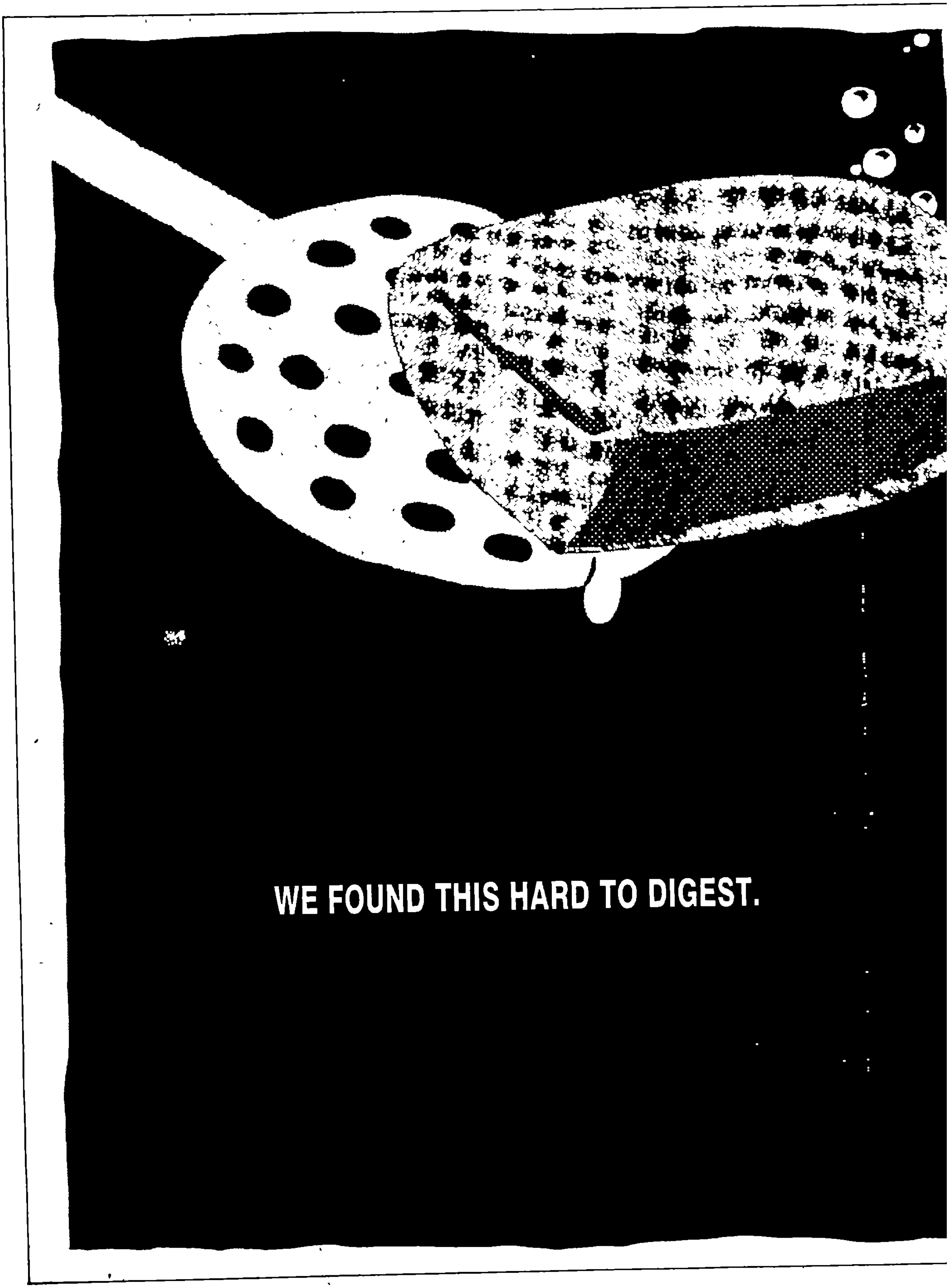
Into this critical situation is now injected the desperate remedy of "structural adjustment" for the sake of generating a mere two per cent of the GDP in terms of foreign resources.

What are these structural adjustments? They are conditions the IMF imposes before giving a large loan to a recipient country, viz., (a) the integration of the economy into the world economy, (b) curbing the role of the government, particularly the public sector, in the economy and (c) allowing the market forces to play a greater role.

"Joining the global market" means free entry of multinationals on their terms. While their brands, patents and products would obtain free access in India, we would neither have access to their technology, nor would Indians be allowed free access to jobs in the countries of these MNCs. Multinationals would be free to take over even the manufacture of goods made traditionally by our small scale, cottage and tiny sectors where 17 lakh units employ 1.2 crore persons. Most of these persons would be rendered idle. Labour intensive village industries would be wiped out in the same way as the Manchester Textile Mills in England wiped out our handloom weavers during the industrial revolution.

By reducing the role of the government, such objectives of our development planning as

(Continued on page 23)



WE FOUND THIS HARD TO DIGEST.

Today, Indian scientists have attracted world attention with their many achievements. The Green Revolution that was a big leap forward in making us self-sufficient in foodgrain production. The distinction of making India one of the first developing countries to use nuclear power for peaceful purposes. The satellite communication programme that linked every corner of our vast country and connected us to the rest of the world. Just some examples of how India uses science to develop relevant technology for the country's needs

For instance, there was a time not long ago, when soaps were made mainly from edible oils. But India really needed it for cooking. Hindustan Lever scientists took up the challenge. They researched processes for the upgradation of inedible oils such as castor, karanja and kusum for soap manufacture. Nowhere in the world had this been done. They thus proved that they were capable of providing solutions in the interest of the country's future. Besides saving almost Rs. 200 crores per year on importation costs.

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As we build brands and venture into new businesses, we keep discovering the enormous wealth of India's intellect. It has helped us meet every challenge. And motivated our growth plans. We know we can set our sights far. To a future where India will be playing a dynamic role in the emerging world economy. We'll be proud to help her reach that goal. For we believe that if you have a dream and the determination, India will take you there. We have seen it happen. For 60 years.

India can. India did. India will.

HTA 3575

Industry, Technology and Multinationals

J.D. SETHI

Those who are pillorying the Rao-Manmohan's economic policies should stop to address themselves three questions: First, what is new in the New Economic Policy? On serious reflection, it would be found that the current policy is an accentuation and a logical outcome of the policies of the last four decades. The new elements have been introduced rather dramatically in a short span of time and would not have provoked criticism had the time-spread been longer. After all, liberalisation and globalisation began more than 11 years ago.

Second, almost the whole of large scale Indian industry has been tied to foreign multinationals and technological regimes. India has less than 10,000 large manufacturing units and the number of collaborations signed are more than 15,000. It is difficult to pinpoint a single new major industrial unit to have come up with entirely Indian money, management and technology. The foreign brand consumer goods produced in India dominated the Indian market. The FERA laws have been the most useful instruments in the hands of the multinationals.

Third, India's science and technology policies has been so poorly organised, made so dependent on external knowledge and so much divorced from linkage with industry that except for selected areas, there is hardly any worthwhile R&D. Out of 5500 crores of rupees spent on R&D, nearly 5000 crores go for nuclear, space and defence research. There was no reason or motivation for the foreign collaborators to particpate in genuine technological effort. The science laboratories and establishments are producing junk. Despite very heavy scientific and technological establishments, the two remain distinct.

There has been massive confusion and dependence in Indian policy in respect of import of technology and domestic R&D. Even on paper, Nehru had a science policy but no corresponding technology framework. Indira Gandhi had announced a technology policy without a science policy. Rajiv Gandhi had neither. There is not much point in speaking about others. The critical point is that the foreign aid to which Indian industrialisation was tied as well as the continuation of the colonial structure thwarted the growth of indigenous science and technology. Both in theory and practice, we put too much emphasis on science and too little on technology, getting the worst of both. By contrast, over the last four and a half decades, Japan put all its eggs in the technology basket. After having acquired technological supremacy, she is now moving towards big science.

The author, a noted economist, is a former Member of the Planning Commission.

The continuous import of the same old technology, its heavy consumer bias, stiffling conditions of collaboration agreements, etc. are crippling our industry. The only effective defence against technological colonialism, namely, the development of our own science and scientists, technology and technologists, etc., has become a victim of this colonialism. Our scientists got recognition in their own land only after they were given recognition abroad. The entire atmosphere and organisation of research in India was designed to dovetail it to scientific developments elsewhere and had little relevance to the development of those technologies and such adaptation of imported one as would have been both commensurate with our own factor proportions and change in these proportions in desired directions.

Technology may be said to recognise to national boundaries. But there is as yet no such thing as its international application, except what the multinationals decide. Nominally each nation alone uses and develops technology by its own conscious deliberate action but not in reality. Technical change is one thing but a choice of a particular technique is quite another.

No wonder, that the multinationals have been making consistent inroads into Indian economy and the Indian policy responses have been so enimical to indigenous development that it seems the Government of India and the multinationals have converged to deny India the opportunity to exploit its technical manpower. Besides, there has been total confusion in science and technology policies.

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MORE than capital and other resources, natural and man-made, it is the growing technological gap between the rich and the poor that lies at the source of great world disorder. The new order threatens to make the situation explosive and condemn the poor countries to new economic and intellectual domination. Three distinct trends are noticeable. First, technological development in the Advanced Developed Countries (ADCs) has given rise to the power of collossal corporations. And it is these corporations which with their technological, financial and communication power have become both the makers of the goods and the makers of the desire for them.

Second, although high degree of specialisation, complexity of decision-making, risk and financial backing that make technological development take the organisational form of big corporations, beyond a certain limit these corporations break through national barriers to become multinationals. The present vehicle of economic domination by the North of the South is the multinational corporation. Over 4000 of these exist today, most have their headquarters in the USA but there are a growing number of others with headquarters in Europe and Japan.

Third, these corporations squeeze out small competing firms in the LDCs, evade local taxes through numerous devices, send large profits back to the ADCs, utilise capital-intensive technology that was once used in the industrialised countries, and successfully dump them in the LDCs.

The analysts of the multinationals, be they of Dependency and Interdependence theory, accept that "the power of the global cooperation derives from its unique capacity to use finance, technology and advanced marketing skills to integrate production on worldwide scale and thus to realise the ancient capitalist dream of one Great Market".[1] However, one of the important features of these companies is their "overwhelmingly oligopolistic character that is, they dominate in markets effectively controlled by a few buyers or sellers".[2] Their large size, control of technological and product innovation and differentiation, brands and patents, power over investment location, research programme, transfer prices, etc. give the multinationals political power to determine the range of oligopolistic global strategy and a common global control.

Earlier, in search for markets and profits the MNCs drove into the LDCs but later their main interests pushed them towards those areas which were trade oriented. The ADCs constituted the trade dominated area. The LDCs both welcomed as well as repelled them, depending upon their own evaluation. Those who welcomed them without safeguards came to grief because of the economic control exercised by the MNCs. Those who tried to repel them but also failed to develop their own science and technology also came to a sorry pass because they lost the trade leverage and ultimately had to reverse their negative attitude.

Multinational trading regimes may be in private hands as in the West, semi-public enterprises, again in the West, or full owners and controlled by the state as in the communist countries. Now these multinationals take recourse and finally work for countries which have reached a certain stage of development, not necessarily for the country of their origin. For countries below that critical level of development these multinational corporations may not work and are not known to have worked for. Instead, scales are reversed in order to control these countries. The restrictions they impose with respect to technological diffusion, export markets, domestic competition, etc. make them barriers to development because they create enclaves and a new dualism on an existing dualistic economy.

Even with a most favourable MNC package, the LDCs are not allowed to determine the appropriateness of commodity production and technological use. The net result was the perpetuation of domestic dualism of colonial era and this ensured profits for the MNCs. The MNCs determine the share of trade for the LDCs as prompted by their global strategies as well as the aforementioned dualism. Since the trend is towards greater trade integration among the ADCs for a variety of reasons, the LDCs trade loses its autonomous character. Thus the MNCs, with their control over resources, their oligopolistic power and their focus on the ADCs' economic development, etc. ultimately marginalises and Darwinises and LDCs first on trade and then through trade in the economic development of many of the LDCs, ironically by operating within the LDCs official policies.

We know that 75 per cent of the Western world's production comes from between one and two thousand firms. In the United States, 60 per cent of the national capital is in the hands of just two hundred firms. In France, where integration is considerably less advanced, 0.4 per cent of business enterprises, that is to say, 800 firms, are responsible for 47 per cent of total production. Similarly, international investments are the prerogative of a restricted number of firms: just 165 British firms are responsible for 80 per cent of overseas investments; in Germany 82 firms provide 70 per cent of foreign investments; three-quarters of United States external investment comes from 190 firms".[3] The general trend is that the rise of a few oligopolistic firms control anywhere between one-half to two-thirds of the total production.

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ANOTHER impact of the technological gap is the shift from turning old colonies as sources of raw material and markets for the goods of the metropolitan power, into a new instrument of control by the multinationals of the combined resources and markets of the many countries. But, more significantly, it is the transfer of light industries into areas of cheap labour that makes the new phase. Goods requiring sophisticated technologies are kept at industrial centres while those using limited technologies are spread out.

Prof. Meister has drawn attention to this and another allied problem. "The transfer of light industry to zones of cheap, competent and docile labour—as is the case today in South-East Asia—means a comparable reduction in the number of immigrant workers at home, and hence helps to diminish racial ill-feeling with its unfortunate consequences of industrial and social unrest. Similarly, on the model of tax havens the absence of anti-pollution legislation (or the floating therefore, the poor countries create real 'havens for polluters'—so as a new style of international division of labour is gradually coming into being, the rich countries keeping the highly capitalised industries with the clean factors to themselves, while the poor countries manufacture labour-intensive products involving dirty factories."[4]

In this milieu, it is becoming increasingly difficult for any single country to find national and indigenous solution for its socio-economic problem. (This inability leads to serious political complications.) It is not surprising that for decades both Washington and Moscow denounced the so-called narrow nationalism of the poor and newly independent countries which ware slowly sucked into every new economic order without their consent, an order which condemned them to live first in dependency and then in global slums. Even a poor country is forced to put all its eggs in the export basket. This is the practice today. It was not so ten or fifteen years ago even when the economic plight of these countries was unenviable.

Modern technological regimes are formed not by nations but by economic organisations and interests on the one hand and by scientists and technological experts on the other. Every nation tries to keep control on both because in the final analysis their competitiveness and productivity increases depend upon their control of technologies. Economic nationalism of the ADCs is most fiercely reflected in their national as well as MNC-alliance technological regimes. Even within the alliance system secretiveness, jealousies and desire for appropriation in respect of technologies remained a critical barrier to further integration. Unlike the international trading regimes such as the GATT and other organisations, there is no trading international technological regime. The day such a regime comes into being the monopoly of the control of a few powerful nations over the rest would be complete. At present only the EEC is moving in that direction. Before such a calamity comes down on the world from all sides, it is important that a more equitable, ecologically justifiable and aesthetically satisfying technological progress must be created right now.

Notwithstanding all the promises that the emerging technolgical regimes are making, they are neither able nor find it in their interest to reach out to the vast starving millions whose survival is jeopardised by the technological regimes themselves.

The prevailing technological and scientific regimes are dominated by the production of the weapon system on the one hand and those other technologies which are either focussing on consumer durables or on the information of the other. Of course, there are new frontiers of space bio-technology, genetics, etc. about which the world is still as much in awe as it is hopeful. It seems that the global economic system, knowledge order and the security system are now dominated by technological regimes in which economic, security and knowledge themselves become the components.

The choice before every nation is how to (a) formulate its own policies and (b) how to negotiate with multinationals. Ideas are free but their economic application is a costly affair, which people only as a nation can undertake. The case for economic nationalism as well as of genuine globalisation refers to laying down of investment and technological priorities and having by deliberate conscious choice a spectrum of techniques from the best downward.

But more important, as the Korean and the Japanese experiences teach us, will be each capacity to play one multinational against another; one developed country against another; and one international regime against another. It is a ruthless world and we have to resort to every conceivable method used by others to get designs and integrate them with our own with the help of scientists and technologists of which there is no dearth. We will also have to sell most of our research institutions to those Indian industrialists who alongwith the government would be ready to engage in this extremely complicated defensive-offensive strategy. ■

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JAYA JAITLY & S. MOHAN: Employment

(Continued from page 17)

redressing regional imbalances, development of backward areas, progress in health and education and employment generation would be greatly affected. Cuts in investment in the public sector and privatisation of the existing public sector shall vacate areas of economic activity to favour expansion of the private sector and the MNCs. With firm indications of stagnation in the economy and reduction in employment in the private sector, the scope for employment generation would be limited to only high wage jobs catering to the middle class consumer—the so-called "service" sector—while other jobs will be drastically reduced. So long as prices rise, the reduction in employment is not likely to serve the purpose of releasing resources for generating alternative jobs elsewhere. Moreover, the tight money policy of the government and high rates of interest charged by banks by causing deceleration, have hit the more employment generating sectors as agriculture, small and medium industry.

The International Labour Organisation and the UNDP workshop held in late December 1991 predicted that 30-40 lakh people will be rendered unemployed in 1992-93 and 80 lakh to one crore people in 1993-94. The Railways, for example, are expected to gradually reduce their workforce by nine lakhs. The trend to make regular employment casual would be stronger and the incidence of poverty would increase since the unorganised and informal workforce would be hit the hardest. When only 10 per cent of our workforce is in the organised sector, the remaining 90 per cent will be dealt a double blow.

A look at the situation in South America will show what happens to a population reeling under a dramatic fall in real incomes and a loss in employment generation—the per capita GDP has fallen by 10 per cent over the past 10 years. In Argentina and Peru the fall has been as much as 25 per cent to 30 per cent. Real average wages in 1990 were only 68 per cent of the 1981 level in Argentina, 85 per cent in Brazil, 75 per cent in Mexico and 44 per cent in Peru. The Urban unemployment rates also increased substantially in almost all the countries. Can we afford it in India where unemployment figures are already so high? The answer must be an emphatic no.

The Exit policy announced by the government and denounced by the trade unions aims at abandonment of the government's responsibility to protect the workers from retrenchment by its refusal to take over the management of sick industrial units and permission for closure and lockout of such units. Even when there was no challenge by the MNCs to our industrial units in the past, industrial sickness attacked hundreds of large units owing to multinationals' competition and gross mismanagement. Apart from it, retrenchment was also resorted to, sometimes in the name of rationalisation. Now that there shall be harder competition for our industry as imports shall be free, industrial closures will grow. Technological modernisation in collaboration with the MNCs or owing to direct investments by the latter would also lead to retrenchments.

New technology has always brought displacement, particularly of unskilled, semi-skilled and women workers. Re-employment for those affected will be more difficult once multinationals take over.

The gap between exit and re-employment which is estimated at a minimum of three years does not address itself to the question of funds necessary for massive retraining programmes and relief in the interim period. Moreover, 10 per cent reduction of the Plan in crucial Ministries such as Rural Development, and Education and Health has already been announced, and it leaves little room for the government to manoeuvre vis-a-vis re-employment of laid off workers.

The Constitution of India guarantees special opportunities and reservation for Backward Classes in Article 15(4) and 16 (4) but this is only binding on the state, that is, the government jobs in the Central and State sectors, including the public sector. With a freeze or reduction in employment in government, and the replacement of State sector by private sector, the availability of such jobs for Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes would be adversely affected. As the private sector has no obligation to employ anyone who requires special opportunities and positive discrimination. Thus the concept of social justice envisaged in the Mandal Commission recommendations will be quietly but effectively negated. Since reduction in employment usually takes place at the low paid, unskilled and semi-skilled levels first, the first to go will be the depressed and Backward Classes who have hitherto had to man these levels of jobs because of social discriminations.

We have alluded to the adverse effects of the introduction of sophisticated modern technology, rapid destruction of the small sector in competition with the MNCs and the MNC assisted large industries. Even the medium sector could be seriously affected by tight money policy followed by the government, freezing of recruitment in the government sector, reduction of employment by 10 per cent in certain departments of the government and the Exit policy announced by it.

There is, however, a much bigger danger. The government has been presented a memorandum by Arthur Dunkel, Director General of the GATT. If the terms set in it are accepted, then certain developments will further depress employment. For one, the government will have to reduce allocations to some functions in order to bring Budget deficit below six per cent of the GDP. The government shall also be prevented from launching employment generating schemes in the future.

The GATT negotiators want Indian patent laws to be changed so that the MNCs are able to compete with Indian pharmaceutical firms. The latter which has provided us with basic life saving drugs and found large number of jobs shall suffer badly while medicines will become even more expensive. There is also the demand that foreign firms should be allowed in banking and insurance. These firms would attract Indian depositors and the deposits shall be used not by Indian investors but by them and preferably outside India. the prospects of employment generation by use of these deposits in indigenous industry will be diminished.

Agriculture is another area and much more vital for our economy and its capacity to employ the mass of the people. It has also to be opened to the MNCs for their imports, for creation of seed farms and for food processing. Change of patent laws in their favour will help this process. In particular, the change from patenting of the processes of manufacture to patenting of products, as demanded in the Dunkel memorandum, would mean that in respect of all the various varieties of seeds produced in seed farming, products in pesticides, weedicides, fertilisers and processed food products, which get patented by them. Indian manufacturers, big or small, shall be banned from producing them. It will thus block expansion of indigenous agricultural development and food processing for good. Patenting of products shall create monopolies and the prices of the products would also increase, thereby leaving very little in a person's pocket to invest.

Large investments by the MNCs in agriculture in order to capture our large market will help to capitalise it. A regime of very large farms will come up. The whole effort at land reforms and equitable redistribution of land, which had remained as an objective of state policy, shall have become unavailing. To the extent that this effort meant larger employment generation, this goal will be seriously compromised. The number of those employed in agriculture, particularly agricultural workers, marginal, petty and small farmers, will come down heavily while they will have nowhere else to go. It has already been pointed out that the rate of growth of employment in rural areas was 0.95 per cent in 1982-83 to 1987-88. This trend shall only be reinforced further.

Import to India of surplus agricultural produce and processed foods from developed countries would further affect the development of or agriculture and food processing industry. Our cultivators will get a raw deal, as also small enterpreneurs.

The evil effects of massive use of chemicals and synthetics in agriculture and processed foods are also becoming well known now. The MNCs are committed to massive introduction of these harmful techniques. Patenting of bio-techniques and genetic products and their unrestricted utilisation in agriuclture would prove detrimental to India's interest and to the health of the people. This will obliterate the use of alternative organic techniques traditionally followed in India. ■

Scope for Major Breakthrough

SYED ALI MUJTABA

A year after the return of democracy in Bangladesh, the BNP leader Begum Khaleda Zia is on her way for a full-fledged official visit to New Delhi. It is imperative that a rapproachment between the two neighbours takes place for the sake of regional peace and stability. The issues high on agenda are the problem of Burmese refugees and its implication on the Chakma tribals, the sharing of the Ganga waters, the Tin Bigha corridor, the Bangladeshi influx into India (mainly Assam and West Bengal), the New Moore Island, the arms buildup, economic relations, the SAARC, etc.

The repression unleashed by the Burmese Army on its ethnic minority is not a new phenomenon, but what makes the present situation more complicated is that this time the targets are the Rohingas from the Arakan. Mostly Muslims, they have been pouring into Bangladesh's Cox Bazar telling horrifying tales; and these are attracting the attention of the international media. It is a period of border tension between Bangladesh and Burma. The complexities of the issue are compounded by the fact that Bangladesh's overtures towards China to mitigate the problem were cold-shouldered. In such a situation there was no alternative but to look towards India. The possibility to defuse this tense situation will likely to figure prominently in the talks at New Delhi.

Related to it is the ongoing settlement of these refugees in the Chittagong Hill tracts, jeopardising the prospects of repatriation of the Chakma tribals stranded in Tripura. In 1989 a joint delegation visited the Bangladesh refugees camped in the North-East and there was a commitment from the side of Dhaka for a speedy settlement of these tribals. The case of Chakmas is now becoming weak with the new situation developing in Bangladesh on the Burmese front.

A major snag in bilateral relations is the sharing of the Ganga waters and construction of dams on the common river to augment water resources. An interim agreement on this water problem expired in 1988 and no permanent solution is in sight. Bangladesh has been pressing for the construction of a reservoir in Nepal but our stand is to have a link canal connecting Brahmaputra and Farakka through Bangladesh. Nothing has moved since the 1987 summit and the government at both the ends require a regional approach to settle their grievances. This visit would likely to see a major breakthrough on this score.

The author is a Research Scholar in the South Asia Division of the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

The other major task for which a consensus has been almost reached is the handing over of the Tin Bigha corridor to Bangladesh after the epoch-making judgement by the Supreme Court of India. A lot of fuss is being made by the Right-wing forces and the Forward-Block but the present government is committed to fulfil its promises. The speedy conclusion of formalities will facilitate the movement of people from the Dahagrum and Angrapota enclaves to the Bangladesh mainland.

The Bangladeshi influx into India is lately assuming serious proportions. This too is likely to come up at the talks.

Another major hurdle between the two countries is to lead a joint survey to expedite the dispute over Talpaty or New Moore Island. Both the countries have also to make progress combating cross-border insurgency and maintain peace along their common South-East border. The two nations have to settle the land boundary agreement and sort out the delimitation of maritime borders. Our country's responses have been lukewarm and one has to wait and watch how much further progress is made after the conclusion of the negotiations.

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SINCE the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975, a significant shift is discernible in the political parameters of our neighbouring country. The arms buildup by Bangladesh under successive military regimes has ominous portents for this subcontinent. The growing tilt towards external military assistance is viewed apprehensively by New Delhi. Bangladesh is facing the dilemma of keeping the pulls and pressures of external and internal forces inimical to its interest and strike a balance in terms of regional security arrangements. Begum Khaleda Zia's electoral rhetoric of Bangla nationalism has to keep into account the enigma of a nation whose twists and turns in pursuit of individuality is thwarted by

Indo-centric expressions.

The Bangladesh leadership has to grapple with the colossal task of development. Khaleda Zia's priorities of market economy, industrial development and privatisation fall within the general trend of opening up the economies in South Asia. Both India and Bangladesh can make efforts to diversify and expand their economic cooperation through improved linkages. They can also rectify the trade imbalance by joint ventures, industrial investment and cooperations in technical know-how. The bilateral negotiations in New Delhi will see a new economic era dawning between the two countries.

The late President, Zia-ur-Rehman, visualised the fear psychosis of a small nation in South Asia and floated the idea of regional cooperation. The SAARC therefore has an emotional role vis-a-vis Indo-Bangladesh relations. But the latest trend of aborting the SAARC is not a healthy sign. If the SAARC fails in its letter and spirit it would give impetus to the already growing desire in Bangladesh to discard its South Asian obsession. This would be catastrophic from the standpoint of the interest of the subcontinent. Both India and Bangladesh have high stakes in rejuvenating the SAARC as a forum for building a healthy relationship among themselves.

In the wake of the evolving intra-regional world order, the United States is learnt to have accepted India's dominant role in South Asia. This is evident from its consent to the IPKF operations in Sri Lanka and the manner in which India handled the coup attempt in the Maldives. Besides, in the post-Cold War phase there are growing military linkages of the US with India. On the other hand, Bangladesh under the aegis of the BNP is heavily loaded in favour of America. This provides, according to some observers, a common ground for the two countries to come closer. In the wake of such commonality, would the amicable settlement of the Tin Bigha corridor issue lead to a perceptible dilution of the anti-India stand built by Khaleda Zia during the elections? The meeting of the leaders in New Delhi could provide the reply. The meeting may strike a new beginning in this direction.

The interaction between India and Bangladesh is fairly wide in the cultural, scientific and literary fields. A special endeavour is required to strengthen the bonds of friendship. The building blocks are movies, music and the game of football. Relaxation of travel facilities and the consequent intermingling of large number of people can build the bridge of fraternity. The meeting of the leaders in New Delhi is expected to bring about a major breakthrough on the contentious issues. This visit of Begum Khaleda Zia will be a big leap forward in cementing the historical ties which India and Bangladesh together share. ■

DYNAMIC TEACHING', addresses to teachers of academic Colleges, Universities and Students of Masters' and Bachelors' of Education.

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Caste and Women's Sexuality: A Look at Chundur and Chelkurthi

KANCHA ILAIAH

Caste has added to the complexity of the Indian social system. Women who suffer from inequality in every society face more complex problems and abnormal atrocities in a hierarchically divided society. Atrocities on women are common phenomena in every society as atrocities against women are part of the patriarchal relations. In addition to patriarchal atrocities, caste atrocities mutilate the physical and mental faculties of women in a far more brutal way. In institutions like *sati* and widowhood we find patriarchal power and caste domination inextricably intertwined. Let us not forget the fact that *sati* and widowhood, if not child marriage, were upper caste (Brahmin, Kshatriya, and in rare cases, Vaisya) practices.

For a variety of reasons, women in upper caste (*grihasutra* bound) families suffered more inequalities and more subtle forms of suppression than the women of working class/castes suffer at the hands of their own men. This is not to claim that working class/caste women do not suffer at the hands of their own men. Wife beating, for example, might be more prevalent among working class/castes than upper class/castes but the difference is that the working class/caste women have an outlet. As those of us born and grown in working class/castes know for sure that the working fields wherein they share their experiences and form into peer groups give scope for ventilating their anger and the peer groups provide a platform to criticise the atrocities of the husbands and the male members of the family. But the position of the upper caste women is different. Their distance from fieldwork and confinement to house isolates and stifles them though economically their lifestyles are far more richer than those of the working class/caste women.

We shall examine in this article the problems that Dalit, lower caste and upper caste women face in a socio-political situation where anti-caste struggles by the Dalit masses and casteist and hegemonic reaction of the upper castes to these struggles are on the increase. The Chundur incident of Andhra Pradesh where eight Dalits have been butchered by the Reddy landlords and police combine and three more are still missing, who are also suspected to have been killed in the same carnage, and the Chelkurthi incident, where Muthamma a Backward Class woman was stripped and paraded naked again by Reddys, provide a context to look at this question both from theoretical and practical points of view.

The author is Reader in the Department of Political Science, Osmania University, Hyderabad.

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PATRIARCHAL and male chauvinist cultures of the upper castes find expression in a strange manner during such caste carnages. In the case of the Chundur carnage, as in the case of Karamchedu in 1985, the justification of the carnage is quickly done through floating rumours that the Dalit men at Chundur attacked or humiliated or raped upper caste women. It is significant that the news that broke out 48 hours after the carnage took place (the carnage took place on August 9) mentioned that one of the main reasons for such brutal killings was the humiliation meted out to the upper caste women at the hands of the Dalit men. But no newspaper published specific cases of such incidents or investigated any of them later on. No report, including the pamphlet printed by the Bharatiya Mahila Seva Samithi (an upper caste women outfit), mentioned names of the men and women involved in such incidents. And yet it is now widely, especially among the upper castes, believed that this was the reason for butchering of eight persons who were then packed into gunny bags and thrown into the Tungabhadra drainage canal. This reason was repeatedly mentioned without mentioning a single woman victim's name from the upper caste. Why were the names of upper caste women who had been subjected to humiliation by Dalits not mentioned?

There are two possible reasons for this silence. First, not that there were no incidents that caused tension between the upper castes and Dalits involving man-woman relationships, sexual or otherwise. It is possible that Dalit men may have "teased" upper caste women. It is also possible, in the context of the social changes that were taking place in coastal districts, that Dalit men may have spoken to upper caste girls or women and began to make friends with them. Perhaps they made attempts to marry upper caste women. All these are possible. In a caste culture such incidents invoke the anger of the upper castes more than, let us say, the murder of an upper caste man by Dalits. Yet, neither men nor women of upper caste dare to specify the incidents by revealing the names of the upper caste women involved. This is because the upper caste women's sexuality is seen as something that is so sacred and so bound up with the honour of the patriarchal family that once the involvement is disclosed the upper caste men will not think of living with such women (if they are married) and if such women are not yet married, it is next to impossible to get them married to men of the same caste. Secondly, whether the involvement was with her own consent or forced up on her, for the upper caste woman it is impossible to live in her family after such an involvement is discovered.

The attacks against Dalits are being exposed but many cold-blooded murders of upper caste women who were suspected of having developed sexual relations with Dalit men are not even leaked out to the neighbours because the murder takes place within the "private domain" of the "sacred family".

The murders, if known, are justified by community members because in their view caste hegemony and women's sexuality are very closely linked and hence a woman who involves herself in such inter-caste relationship is responsible for destabilising the caste hegemony. In a casteist social structure, one of the symbols of upper caste hegemony is the control over women's sexuality. Women's sexuality, thus, becomes the main instrument through which caste hegemony is sought to be maintained. This is one of the reasons why the rumours of upper caste women humiliated by Chundur Dalitmen quickly mobilised the support to Reddy murderers. Cutting across the caste differences, the upper castes of the area not only supported the murderers, they formed an upper caste outfit called "Sarvajanabhyudaya Samithi" to defend the brutality.

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SEVERAL other examples of such murders of Dalit men by upper castes indicates the entanglement of caste and the control over the sexuality of upper caste women. The infamous incident of the burning alive of Koteshu, a Dalit *Jeeta*, twenty years ago by the upper caste landlords of Kanchikacherla of Krishna district is generally mentioned as one of the first incidents in a history of brazen atrocities on the Dalits in Andhra. The lynching was justified because Koteshu was said to have "developed sexual relations" with an upper caste landlady. In other words, a society not burdened by caste would merely say that the landlady and Koteshu loved each other. But the caste culture expects that love and affection on the part of upper caste women is something that should take place only within the parameters of caste. This principle, however, does not apply to the upper caste men. They can engage themselves in sexual intercourse with lower caste women, with or without their consent. On the contrary, even a normal conversation between the upper caste women and lower caste men, particularly with Dalit men, is seen as a crime. If any such thing takes place, the consequences are bound to be serious. The first thing that happens is that the man involved will be killed. In the 1960s, Koteshu was burnt alive precisely for this reason. As late as March 1990, yet another Dalit *Jeeta*, Arlappa by name, was killed by the landlords of the same village as he was said to have developed a close friendship with the daughter-in-law of a landlord; in June 1990 at Kothapulavandlapalli of Ananthapur district, a Dalit farm servant was burnt alive by the landlords on the same pretext.

The Chelkurthi incident is yet another milestone in a history of upper caste decadant culture. This took place exactly eight days after the Chundur carnage. If Chundur reflected the Reddy arrogance of Guntur district, Chelkurthi reflected the Reddy decadant of Nalgonda district. At Chelkurthi, a Reddy woman, Jayamma, and a Golla (BC) boy, Govindu, were said to have been carrying on a relationship for almost five years. As Jayamma's brother, Narayana Reddy, was blackmailing her, on August 4 both Jayamma and Govindu eloped and it was suspected that Muthamma, another Golla woman, aided the couple in eloping. Narayana Reddy (who is not a rich person at all) alongwith two other Reddys—Parvatha Reddy and Venkatarami Reddy—disrobed Muthamma, inserted chilli powder and stuck a stick into her vaginal track, and paraded her naked in the village for more than three hours. Muthamma has not yet recovered from the vaginal infection and wounds, thus caused in mid-September. Of course, the Chelkurthi incident alongwith the Chundur carnage rocked the entire state and Parvatha Reddy was later killed.

This incident brings to light that apart from the brazenness with which the upper caste can strike terror among the SCs and the OBCs is that the sexuality of women too has caste dimensions. If a Reddy woman loves a BC boy, the relatives of the boy have to face the consequences as Muthamma did. The harassment and rape of lower caste women by upper caste men is a common occurrence and even has social sanction. Assuming that the Chundur Reddys' claim is accepted, if the Dalit men harassed upper caste women, will the Dalit men be butchered? The caste culture believes that it should be so.

I am not suggesting even for a minute that the upper caste women do not have to pay the price for relationships they might develop with lower caste men. They will be tortured within the four walls of their home. They will be confined to the household, labelled as insane, tortured mentally and physically. In some cases they might even be killed. As we have discussed above, the news of such killings will not be leaked out and even if they do such actions, including murders, have the approval of the upper caste community. Even the parents of such women suffer silently rather than make them issues because entering into relations with lower caste men, particularly untouchables, is enough reason to be killed or tortured for the rest of their lives. What is more, since everything is hushed up, there is no way to confirm or bring to light the misery of such women. At least we know how Koteshu was burnt alive, Arlappa was killed, buried in the landlord's fields and how Muthamma was tortured but we do not know what happened to those upper caste women who developed relations with BC men willingly.

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THE much propagated Chundur Dalit misbehaviour with upper caste women was another stunt. Chundur is one of the best examples of growing anti-caste consciousness of Dalit masses. The Dalit youth in Chundur were fighting on many fronts against untouchability. They attempted to install the Ambedkar statue in the midst of the village, despite upper caste opposition; they insisted on sitting amidst upper caste people on festive occasions (or whenever there were street dramas) and on some occasions they succeeded. For example, they succeeded in installing Ambedkar's statue, they succeeded in sitting amidst upper caste folks at a street drama staged on Dussehra day in 1990. It is also possible that they were also trying to interact with upper caste women or girls. There were more educated youth in *Dalitwada* than in upper caste *wadas* (there are more number of graduates and post-graduates among Dalits than among upper castes at Chundur). In such a situation, college going Dalit boys naturally began to interact with upper caste girls in the train and bus journey from Chundur to Tenali (Tenali is 20 kilometres away from Chundur and for college education the students travel that distance everyday). Many Dalits would attempt to strike friendship with upper caste women and finally convert that friendship into marriage as a process of upgradation in the caste hierarchy. In rare cases, especially if the parents of the girls are poor and the boy is well educated and willing to marry the girl, the parents are willing to accept such marriages as such a process would get them out of the enormous burden of the dowry trap.

The parents of many Kamma women have allowed their daughters to marry Dalit men (in this regard the Reddys of Andhra are more conservative). But by and large the opposition to such inter-caste marriages comes from the rich upper castes because they see this process as an affront to their caste cultural hegemony. At Chundur every such inter-caste inter-action between Dalitmen and upper caste women is sought to be projected as sexual harassments or misbehaviour of Dalits towards upper caste women and in no single incident do they pinpoint to anyone particular because the upper caste girls who form alliances with Dalits will have to face social censure if the names are revealed. The village upper caste elite do not keep quiet if they decide to marry Dalits because the flow of upper caste girls into SC, BC families through marriage mechanism would create a crisis in the dowry economy of the upper caste (in Andhra Pradesh the biggest dowry market exists among the Kammas, Reddys and Velamas).

The dowry economy survives as a strong institution only when the marriage system operates within the restricted boundaries of caste. Once the gates are opened by decasteising the sexuality of women the monopoly of the upper caste rich, which survives through exchange of capital within the limited families, suffers a setback. If caste and the caste-based marriage system loosen their grip over the sexuality of women it not only puts an end to caste hegemony but also to the exploitative economic relations. A Dalit in the village is not only seen as an untouchable or a BC as lower caste but in market relations the upper castes are seen as givers and the BC and SCs as takers; the upper caste as supervisors and the lower caste working masses as the supervised and exploited (this does not mean that there are no Reddy, Velama and Kamma labourers but they are few in number. Of course, one hardly comes across a Brahmin labourer).

The market relations and social relations are closely interlinked. One maintains the other and if one changes, the other also begins to change. It is here that caste becomes a base as well as a super structure.In a society of caste hierarchy (in this hierarchy, as Ambedkar rightly pointed out, ascending respect and decending disrespect and inequality survives) and gender inequality (even among women, stature and respectability is based on their caste). Women's sexuality not only gets commoditised but the value of this commodity changes on the basis of their caste. Of course, the rate of male sexuality in the dowry market increases or decreases based on one's caste. Given the equal qualifications the rate of dowry depends on whether one belongs to the Kamma caste, or Reddy caste or Velama caste. The lower the caste one belongs to the lower would be the dowry that one gets. The punishments meted out to male members who interact with upper caste women also depend on their caste. Thus, if upper caste women are humiliated by lower caste men, caste justice demands capital punishment for such an act whereas if lower caste women are humiliated by upper caste men it is not regarded a crime at all.

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THE irony of the situation comes out quite clearly if we examine the upper caste male attitude towards lower caste women. Lower caste women normally go to work in the fields of upper caste landlords. By and large, the attitude of the landlord is that whatever wage he is paying for the day's labour should be regarded as inclusive of his control over her physique. Apart from the fact that he is entitled to abuse and humiliate her, he assumes that she should submit to his overtures. His economic social power in addition to his superior caste often forces the lower caste women to surrender herself, whether she likes it or not. In rare cases such upper caste landlords are attacked or killed by the lower caste people. Because they know that even if they succeed in killing such upper caste rapists the upper caste rich have the strength to attack lower castes, especially the women and the children. They can make the judiciary convict them. The upper caste men, as a rule, are released or given light sentences if found guilty.

Parvatha Reddy, one of the accused in Muthamma's case, had been earlier sentenced to life but was released with the support of a Reddy who held one of the nation's highest offices.

Take, for example, the relationship between upper caste men and untouchable women. The upper caste men refuse to drink the water carried by untouchable women, refuse to eat the food touched by them and if the body of an untouchable women touches them in public they bathe but, in private, as and when they want them sexually, they have to surrender themselves. In other words, their body is untouchable but their sexuality is not.

In rural Telengana, Dalit women invariably go every morning to clean the cattle sheds of landlords (in Telengana the majority of the landlords happen to be Reddys and Velamas) and it is usual practice that the upper caste landlord men rape these women at such times. Even when the women go to the fields they are in danger of being raped. However, not a single incident has come to light where those landlord's were killed by their own caste persons or forced to live with and support the Dalit women. On the contrary, the more such incidents he gets involved in, the greater would be his power. The reputation of having "taken many lower caste and untouchable women" only enhances his social power. The case of Indira, an SC girl near Tanguturu of Prakasham district, illustrates the point more clearly. Indira was a good looking girl who was employed in a private company. As she was earning some salary she was maintaining herself well. A Kamma landlord repeatedly sent feelers asking her to surrender to him sexually. The offer was to have illicit relationship with him but not to legally marry him. Indira spurned the offer. One day the landlord managed to catch hold of Indira and raped her and brutally killed her. Her naked corpse lay on the main road of the village for more than 24 hours. Neither the administration nor the upper castes bothered to remove the body nor to send a message to her relatives. The landlord was neither killed nor socially boycotted nor did the police arrest him.

Even today, after two years (the incident occurred in 1989) the culprit roams scot-free.

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THE attitude of the State is no better. At Chundur, for example, the Superintendent of Police of Guntur District justified the murders of Dalits accusing them of misbehaviour with upper caste women. He justified the police firing that took place on September 10 wherein Anil Kumar, the main witness of August 6 carnage was killed, by stating that the Dalit women pricked pins into the chests of policemen and grabbed their private parts. Would the Superintendent of Police survive even for a day, if he indulges in this kind of talk against the upper caste women? The SP, R.P. Meena, was a tribal himself yet he did not hesitate to describe the SC women as sexually aggressive and perverse.

At Chelkurthi, the police at first refused to register the case, in spite of the fact that Muthamma went to the police station and demanded that they must do so. The murderer of Indira was never arrested. On the contrary, the police, actively aided and abetted the brutal killing of innocent Dalits at Chundur. This kind of anti-women and anti-Dalit bias of the State makes the posture of the Indian States more complex and more dubious. Consequently, it is imperative that anti-caste organisations and women's movements should make for more concerted efforts to fight the gender and caste-based political system of the Indian state and society on many fronts. ■

DUBEY: India's Foreign Policy Dilemma

(Continued from page 3)

developing countries. For, this will amount to putting a freeze on their inudustrial and technological development, thus consigning them to an underdeveloped and subordinate status for all time to come. Moreover, in any regime which imposes a blanket ban on the transfer of dual-purpose technologies and equipment, the distinction between the commercial purpose to shut out outsiders from the market, and consign their economies to the pre-industrial stage of development, and the military purpose of preventing proliferation, generally gets blurred.

Is it not really ironic that while the United States put such a tremendous pressure on India to stop selling an experimental nuclear reactor to Iran, the only nuclear reactor in operation in Iran has been supplied by the United States? In universal disarmament agreements, there is no overall ban on dual-purpose technologies, equipment or substance. And whatever is not specifically prohibited is permitted. Each case of alleged violation is judged on its merits, depending upon the actual situation on the ground.

The US actions have given rise to widespread resentment in the country. The Parliament has been unanimous in demanding that India should not succumb to the US pressure and accept any threat or demand which amounts to an abridgement of our sovereignty. The suggestion has also been made that we should cancel the planned joint naval exercise.

The threatening posture adopted by the United States cannot but act as a dampener in our effort to bring about an all-round improvement of our relations with the United States. However, there is too much at stake in these relations for India to act peevishly. In such matters, we must have a longer-term view of our interest and not do anything for which we may have to regret later. The United States is too big an entity to be wished away from the realm of our foreign policy. Any unilateral action on our part to suspend activities which are in the nature of a positive-sum game is hardly the way of registering our protest or making our point.

The recent events have, however, confirmed our belief that after the end of the Cold War, the United States now sees threats to security coming mainly from the Third World countries. These countries have, therefore, become the main target of its determined bid to ensure that none of them emerges as a military power capable of even remotely challenging the United States' absolute supremacy over the world power structure. There should also be no illusion about the fact that the sole purpose of the United States in imposing its own version of a New World Order is to perpetuate its hegemony and that of its allies over the rest of the world and keep the Third World countries perpetually subservient to this alliance. But this is a grand design which will ultimately come unstuck on account of its own contradictions. In any case, it is the moral duty of India--and fully in keeping with its national interest--to raise its voice against this design and to see that it fails. To this end, India will have to, against all odds, mobilise the Third World countries and the like-minded countries from the North.

The outcome of our endeavour will, in the ultimate analysis, depend on the perception that the United States has of our resilience, our inner strength and our will power. The events of the past weeks have demonstrated the problems we are going to face if we follow a development strategy which in the name of globalisation, makes us increasingly dependent on outside forces, countries and institutions. In our attempt to globalise, we should not go overboard and, in any case, not beyond the point where withdrawal will spell economic disaster. We should follow a development strategy which while keeping our doors open to the wide world, is based primarily on our reliance on, and mobilisation of, our own human and material resources. This will mean greater stress on mass literacy, land reforms and employment generation. A strategy for self-reliant growth will call for greater reliance on exports, avoidance of measures which carry the risk of a sudden depletion of reserves, not creating import-intensive production structures and an absolute ban on foreign borrowing.

Finally, the United States should realise that India cannot share all its prejudices predilections, all its friends and foes. India cannot respect and promote, at the cost of self-abnegation, all its ambitions, including those which, in our view, have pernicious implications for the rest of the world. The United States Government should ask itself: "Is it the only basis to conduct relations with other countries?" ■

Baldev Singh

ASHOK PARTHASARATHI

The following is the text of a statement the author read at the condolence meeting held at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi on May 5, 1992 to mourn the demise of Baldev Singh.

—Editor

Today, it is almost exactly two weeks since Baldev left us. Sometimes I feel it has been years; sometimes it seems a fleeting moment. But the void is deep and it is irreparable.

During one of the occasions, I was with him in the week of April 13, Baldev spoke reminiscently about the CSIR–the CSIR he loved so deeply–about its many vicissitudes, of its present position and of its future Driving back from the hospital that evening, his remarks took my mind back to the occasion in 1968 when I first met him in the CSIR. He was then the head of the Technology Utilisation Division at the CSIR headquarters and the burning issue of the day was the Review Committee on the CSIR which the government had set up under the chairmanship of the late Justice Sarkar. Baldev was deeply agitated by what he rightly saw as the attempts by interested parties to use the Sarkar Committee to pull down the CSIR, demoralise its scientists and discredit the Zaheer years.

When about two years later, I joined the Secretariat of the then PM, Mrs Indira Gandhi, one of the first matters put in my hands was the Sarkar Committee. This brought me into extremely close contact with Baldev and Rahman. With the appointment of Nayudamma as the DG, CSIR in August 1971 a major reorganisation and managerial modernisation of the CSIR was initiated in which also Baldev and I worked closely together.

Our shared conviction in and commitment to the development and more importantly utilisation of the indigenous technology drew us ever closer and we fought many a battle together in this area over the 1970-75 period. It was an exciting if challenging time. I remember being constantly impressed by Baldev's cool, logical analysis of policies and individual cases and his persuasive presentation of his position. As a result, he became the most widely known and respected scientist in the CSIR next only to Nayudamma in the halls and corridors of the government. But Baldev was always a scientist and he kept in close touch not only with all the CSIR laboratories but also with development in science and technology, particularly in his discipline in chemistry.

Over 1975-1984, I saw much less of Baldev because he took on international assignments relating to technology development and technology transfer, first with the UNCTAD in Geneva and Addis Ababa and then with the ESCAP in Bangkok. But the bond between us was deep and close.

I was delighted with his return home in 1984 and even more at his becoming a Professorial Fellow in this institution with the commitment to work on various facets of Nehru and Science and Technology. He was good enough to associate me closely in the preparation of both the books he brought out here--on Nehru and the Science Congress, and Nehru and Science in Parliament.

During one of our many conversations in the later phase of his illness, he expressed to me his great concern that the third book—on Nehru and the Development of Atomic Energy—which he had brought to the stage of only requiring a Preface, should be speedily completed and published. "As soon as I am well again, Ashok, we will take up the biography of Hussain Zaheer on which a draft already exists," said Baldev to me sometime in early March. It is a matter of deep resolve to me to see his wishes fulfilled in this regard. No better tribute can be paid to him.

Baldev was a wonderful person. Deeply human, he combined humility with a steely determination and an uncompromising commitment to a rational, secular India. His was not a case of saying one thing and doing another. His personality was too integrated and genuine for that. He was a deeply loyal friend, a committed comrade-in-arms and a superb son of India. We shall always remember you, Baldev.

■

The Scientist and the Man

The following is the condolence resolution adopted at the meeting held at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi on May 5, 1992 to mourn the demise of Baldev Singh. —Editor

Baldev Singh was a scientist who combined a deep commitment to science with a drive for the development of technology and the rapid industrialisation of the country. A product of the national movement, he worked for the advancement and integration of science and technology with nation-building in the best Nehruvian tradition. Over the fifteen years, he was in the CSIR headquarters, he built up an excellent group of scientists and technologists versed in the multi-disciplinary skills needed to transfer and commercialise indigenous technology developed by our national laboratories.

His years in the UNCTAD, first in Geneva and then in Addis Ababa, and his tenure as the Senior Adviser on Technology to the ESCAP in Bangkok enabled him to communicate his abiding concern for the technological self-reliance of the South, to several other developing countries in Asia and Africa. His analytical studies for both those United Nations agencies have become major reference points in the world literature on technology development and transfer.

A colleague of the late Dr Husain Zaheer, the former Director General of the CSIR, Baldev put in a major effort in development of the Zaheer Science Foundation of which he was the Secretary. In a short span of five years, he placed the Foundation on a firm footing: intellectually, financially and in terms of programmes and activities.

His contributions to science policy studies during his tenure as a Professorial Fellow in the Nehru Museum and Library have already been reflected in two major works—one on Nehru and the Science Congress and the second on Nehru and Parliament. Three more studies—on Nehru and Atomic Energy, Nehru and Industrial Development, and Nehru and Education—were in advanced stages of completion when he was tragically snatched away from us.

But Baldev was much more than a fine scientist, technologist, and a science and technology policy-maker, manager and researcher. He was, above all, a wonderful person. Deeply human, with a most attractive humility, his concerns extended to the transformation of our ancient society into one based on the scientific temper and a strong commitment to secularism. These concerns, on which he wrote and spoke in many fora and on many occasions, brought him into contact with a wide cross-section of our intellectual community on whom his rational and persuasive arguments always left a deep impression.

Baldev Singh will be deeply missed by his numerous friends and admirers. He has left us a full life with a great deal to emulate and pursue further. We place on record our profound appreciation of the scientist and the man and convey to his family, particularly his wife Lalitha, a scientist in her own right, our deepest sympathy on the irreparable loss. ■

AN APPEAL

C. Achyutha Menon Foundation

Dear friend,

C. Achyutha Menon is no more; a matchless statesman, a humanist of impeccable integrity, a champion of the poor and the downtrodden, a writer of repute, he will be remembered for all time

We propose that a suitable memorial be instituted to cherish the message of his multi-splendoured life.

We request you to actively associate with the endeavour in this behalf and donate liberally to the fund being raised by the C. Achyutha Menon Foundation in furtherance of the above objective.

22-11-1991 Yours sincerely,

K. Karunakaran, E.M.S. Namboodiripad, G. Ramachandran, A.K. Antony, E.K. Nayanar, V.R. Krishna Iyer, Indrajit Gupta, P.P. Thankachan, Benedict Mar Gregoriose, Dr K.N. Pai, Dr K.N. Raj, Laurie Baker, P.K. Vasudevan Nair, Jyoti Basu, Mulk Raj Anand, Aruna Asaf Ali, C. Rajeswara Rao, P.N. Haksar, Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai, Dr M.S. Swaminathan, Prof M.G.K. Menon, G. Parthasarathi, I.K. Gujral, Nikhil Chakravartty, K.R. Narayanan, A.K. Damodaran, K.P. Unnikrishnan, Chitta Basu, P.M. Sayeed, N E. Balaram, Dr Poulose Mar Gregoriose, Poulose Mar Poulose, V.K. Madhavan Kutty, Dr I.S. Gulati, Dr Sukumar Azhikode, Dr M.S. Valiyathan, Dr P. Basak, Vaikom Muhamad Basheer, Vijaya Kumar (Hind Samachar), Ali Sardar Jafri, Malcolm Adisheshaiya, Dr C.T. Kurien, Khushwant Singh, Asghar Ali Engineer, S.G. Sardesai, Satyapal Dang, Mohit Sen, Shashi Bhushan, Ghulam Rabbani Taban, R.L. Bhatia, Prof K.N. Panikkar, Adoor Gopalakrishnan.

All donations, in cheques/drafts to:

Secretary
C. Achyutha Menon Foundation
Thycaud, Thiruvananthapuram-695 014

Riots in America Hit the System

BATUK VORA

Faced with intense nationwide criticism that his administration had ignored America's domestic affairs and urban mess, President Bush sought to make his delayed visit to Los Angeles on May 7, a week after the riots in Los Angeles, a proof of his concern for problems at home.

But his attempt was pathetic, to say the least. Most residents of the riot-hit area seemed unconvinced of his sincerity. Many jeered, booed and some flashed obscene gestures at his armoured limousine when Bush tried to show his concern by waving or smiling.

As the flames rose in LA, dust from the city's ashes fell on each of the country's managers. Attempt to paint the riots as only racial in essence have failed. Racism did play its ugly role but the anger and frustration expressed through arson and looting had deeper reasons. The fires are extinguished but the destruction will take generations to fully repair. Paradoxically, it was the voice of sanity raised by the alleged criminal motorist, Rodney King, that had a sobering effect on the rioters, and not of any of those elite politicians.

The LA riots can be described as a turning point in the post-Vietnam American history. More than anything else, it became clear that America, the land of glamour and glitter, of rockets and nuclear armed missiles, of high-tech gadgetry and Hollywood special effects is, after all, a mortal creature and knows well how to destroy itself keeping its international invincibility intact.

The riots stripped some actors bare naked. The steam rolling media of this country, highly manipulated by the military-corporate complex, got it back with a rude shock. The mainstream media felt indequate for the first time. Black street gangs like Bloods and Crips, creation of the American decline, even now have no idea they have hit at the soft spot on the American belly—its urban show-window. The entire American Rightist think-tank apparatus, much more dangerous than the Stalinist machine, has been forced to sit up and review its formules.

Amidst all the sociological and political formulations thrown in the air after this event, closest to the truth comes an insightful remark made by an analyst that says: it is the Pentagon more than anything else that has been hit. Allusion here is about Pentagon's recently leaked out strategy to dominate the world-as a solo-superpower.

They never thought the situation could become so explosive and destructive at home. All their wherewithals are meant so far for a war outside their borders. They never gave a damn on what was cooking at home. A decade and a half of Reagan-Bush era has started boomeranging on them. Bush's popularity dropped down to 33 per cent from his 79 per cent during the Gulf war. Even if Bush wins the election next November, it will be by default. The people have started talking about the need for a 'second' party now—as both the Democrats and the Republicans fall in the same category, more or less.

Socially, America is falling apart. Values are losing their grip. Some problems seem intractable. Racial hatred is showing its ugly teeth. Look at just two or three of the whole anthology--full instances of the breakdown:

- Life expectancy for the young Black males in the cities is lower than for males of equivalent age in Bangladesh;
- The rate for homicide and violent crime are four to ten times higher here than in Europe and three times higher than in Canada;
- The rate of incarceration in the United States has doubled during the 1980s and is expected to double again by the year 2000

Social problems are allowed to fester for such lengths of time that both definitions and possible solutions fade from public consciousness. The only solution the Right-wing administration offers is *first*, that the market be allowed to proceed in its majestic mystery; *second*, that there be improvements in 'character', specially the character of the underprivileged and poor; and *third*, that you agree to believe in 'the limits of social policy'.

It was no surprise when the White House spokesperson, Marlin Fitzwater, came out soon after the riots with Reagan-Bush's old theory that "the cause of the riots was social welfare measures taken by the Democrats in 1960s and 1970s!" But it is not a hidden fact that the social welfare measures (unemployment, single mother allowances, food stamps, relief for the homeless, etc.) take only one per cent of the national budget... as against billions for 'national security'!

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THE Reagan-Bush regimes do not even pretend to have a domestic social policy. So much so that when the Bush Administration approaches a major problem like drugs, it does so without any serious examination of a complex matter. What it did was to declare a 'war' and appointed a Right-wing windbag William Bennett. He spent much of the money on Rambo-style efforts to prevent drugs from crossing the borders, rather than on education and therapy. Bennett had to resign. Nothing succeeds like failure here—it has become a new code of the American capitalism. Tough talk followed by personal gain. Drug war is made like television 'special'. For it is not only that television copies the worst of the society but the latter copies television here.

Fifty years ago, through a series of measures ranging from social security to federal deposit insurance, Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal established a modern social contract in America. The contract fixed the responsibility of the government. Reagan-Bush-Quayle have demolished that idea and Bush's 'thousand points of light' theory in practice fix the individuals responsible for themselves in every matter and not the federal state on anything.

According to the US Conference of Mayors, federal aid to state and local governments fell by $34 billion in real terms during the Reagan decade. They call it 'new federalism'! Substitution of the 'new federalism' with the old 'fiscal federalism' made states and local governments share their deficits instead of revenues! In addition, spending for key 'urban' programmes, such as community development, employment and mass transit fell by 72 per cent between 1979 and 1989. No surprise, the giant urban centres took the road to collapse.

The LA riots further revealed that the American children are more and more in peril, as they are less and less ensured of a sustained care. The entire generation is depicted as 'indifferent'. Most apathetic and alienated are eighteen to twentynine years old. More than 100,000 of them confined to correctional institutions on any given day! Murders committed by juveniles increased three times, rape two times, robberies five times. In 1989 the House Committee on Children, Youth and Families reported a 'national emergency' of growing violence by and against the youth, with homicide a leading killer of Black males aged fifteen to twentyfour. This reflects the breakdown of families, schools and other institutions.

Even when senseless violence, much of it done on television movie-style, wipes out thousands of young people each year, nearly one in every four American infants is born to an unmarried mother, six times as many as four decades ago. Almost 70 per cent of the juveniles in state reform institutions grew up in single parent or no parent families, wrote Karl Zinsmeister in a piece in *Atlantic* recently. The National Adolescent Student Health Survey indicates that "nearly two per cent of all students (338,000 students nationwide) carried a handgun to school at least once" in 1987. The Americans live in fear at home, fear in the halls, fear in the streets... ■

ZHANG XIAODONG: A Chinese View

(Continued from page 4)

exclusively for export.

The Indian Government has also accepted conditions set by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on loans in order to secure funds for its economic readjustment. According to the World Bank, India's unfavourable international balance in the fiscal year 1991-92 was US$ 6.04 billion, a 39 per cent fall compared with the previous fiscal year. An international consortium has agreed to provide India with a loan of US$ 6.7 billion and the IMF has offered another US$ 2.6 billion. Now India's foreign exchange reserve has increased to US$ 5.5 billion. Exports have begun to expand.

India's economic reform had aroused concern within the Congress party. There was fear that the party might deviate from its traditional economic development strategy of independence and self-reliance, protecting national industry and helping the poor.

The fear was soon allayed. At its 79th Conference in April, the Congress party called for continuous reform to accelerate economic development and raise the living standard of the people.

Rao argued that though state-owned enterprises are symbols of self-reliance and the government will by no means give them up, to raise their efficiency and vigour is an unavoidable choice.

For all its initial and notable successes, India's economic reform will not be a smooth process. In a country with 40 per cent of population living below the poverty line and entangled in various party, religious and class contradictions, snags are everywhere. Reform requires everyone to make sacrifices, and then problems come. In addition, the Congress party is vexed with differences of opinion over reform. Some party members accused Rao of dumping its tradition while the Left-wing Opposition party labelled the reform as "anti-popular" and demanded Rao's resignation.

The Rao Government faces both economic and political challenges. Nevertheless, reform is the general trend of development and meets the aspirations of the Indian people. Rao understands that reform is imperative and he will resolve to carry to the end the "second industrial and agricultural revolution" as it is called. ■

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Economy: Danger Signals ● Earth Summit ● Nehru Today

Mainstream

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EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

A Landmark Visit

The visit of the Bangladesh Prime Minister, Begum Khaleda Zia, to New Delhi (May 23-28) marked the opening of a new chapter in India-Bangladesh relations. In the twenty years since Sheikh Mujibur Rahman visited India in 1972, this country got the the first opportunity to greet the head of a democratically elected government from our neighbouring Bangladesh.

Begum Zia was not only received with warmth and cordiality by both the official and non-official circles in New Delhi, but on her part she struck the right chord, when at the banquet hosted by Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, she spoke with grace and sincerity: "Today I am here on a simple mission. Yet it is one of supreme importance. I have come to deliver a message of goodwill. It is from our people to yours. The Bangladeshis hold their Indian brethren in great esteem. Our two nations are linked by bonds rooted in history. My purpose is not only to strengthen those links, but also to create new ones; not only to consolidate our bilateral relations, but also to expand them. I believe you, too, feel that this must be done. We are, therefore, united by a common purpose, aiming at a common goal."

Throughout, this was the running thread of the Bangla Prime Minister's theme—not only to consolidate, but to expand bilateral relations.

In her talks at the summit level with Narasimha Rao, the question of sharing the Ganga water and the problem of Chakmas coming over to eastern India were discussed. On the sharing of the Ganga water, while India conceded to release slightly more than what had been arranged before, both sides agreed to examine the entire question of water flow in its totality as it touches both India and Bangladesh. This would be done at the ministerial and official levels in the weeks and months to come.

What is important to note is that Begum Zia's visit has set the ball rolling towards structuring a durable arrangement for the sharing of river waters, taking into account the total availability as well as the requirements of water of both the countries. One only hopes that unlike what happened in the past, this time the question of harnessing the river waters would be taken up in right earnest and without delay.

In this context, one has to take up all the three aspects of the river

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waters of the entire eastern region of the subcontinent, namely, irrigation, flood control and power generation. It is a cruel commentary on human mismanagement that while some parts of this region have to face the fury of floods, other parts are afflicted by shortage of water supply, while the vast energy potential of one of the most extensive river basin in the world—stretching from the high Himalayas to the Bay of Bengal—has so far not been tapped.

In this mighty endeavour, it is imperative to invite Nepal to participate, as it is not only the source of many of the streams coming down from the Himalayas, but faces problems of similar nature while its needs are similar to those of both Bangladesh and India. A closer understanding between the three neighbours now being ruled by democratic governments can and must be hammered out.

In fact, the structuring of an abiding arrangement for the disposal of river waters of the region, bringing immense benefits to all the three neighbours is one of the unfinished tasks of the liberation struggle of us all, and poses an urgent challenge before all the three neighbouring democracies. Because as democracies they are accountable to the people.

Begum Zia has rightly reiterated in the course of her brief visit to our country that the problem of poverty alleviation is on the top of the agenda before her. This is as is to be expected—for she faces the formidable challenge of bringing back to her country the prosperity of *Sonar Bangla* from the degradation of its being put in the category of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

What is of significance is her emphasis that "peace and stability in South Asia are essential pre-requisites for the success of the liberalisation programmes being pursued by each of us," as she stated during her talk with Indian editors in New Delhi. "It is equally important that this policy of economic reforms and liberalisation should foster an improved climate for our own bilateral economic cooperation. This can change the lot of our two close and friendly neighbours and can bring the two peoples still closer."

It is important to note that Bangladesh under its present government is anxious to infuse the SAARC with a new vision, breaking out of its present constricted agenda. As the next chairperson of the SAARC Summit, Begum Zia's approach to the organisation deserves to be underlined, as she observed before the New Delhi editors: "An atmosphere has also been created to work together for solving the *dal-bhat* problem and alleviation of poverty of the South Asian people under the SAARC framework." She was more explicit in her speech at the Prime Minister of India's banquet: "Together we shall transform the SAARC from a forum of cooperation into a platform to launch a new age of South Asian consciousness. South Asia must not only learn from the world, but must lead the way."

Many problems of major dimension beset her at home—the influx of refugees from Burma, the question of Chakmas, the migration across the border because of economic privation and the position of the minority community. Such problems do figure in the endeavour for close relationship between our two countries. There is, however, no sign of despair on this count, as could be sensed from Begum Khaleda Zia's approach. The point to note is that she wields power as the head of a democratically elected government in the most populous country in South Asia.

There is every reason to hope that her purposeful visit to our country will usher in a new era of friendship and close cooperation between India and Bangladesh which has the promise to surpass in its rich content even the glorious days of the liberation struggle two decades ago.

May 27 *N.C.*

Nehru for Today

The problems which India faces are to some extent common to other countries, but we have new problems for which there are no parallels or historical precedents elsewhere What has happened in the past in the industrially advanced countries has little bearing on us today. As a matter of fact, the countries that are advanced today were economically better off than India today, in terms of per capita income, before their industrialisation began. Western economics, therefore, though helpful, have little bearing on our present-day problems So also have Marxist economics which are in many ways out of date even though they throw a considerable light on economic processes. We have thus to do our own thinking, profiting by the example of others, but essentially trying to find a path for ourselves suited to our own conditions

In considering these economic aspects of our problems we have always to remember the basic approach of peaceful means, and perhaps we might also keep in view the old Vedantic ideal of the life force which is the inner base of everything that exists

Jawaharlal Nehru

(See article on page 7)

Economy: Danger Signals

N.C.

While the political scene in the next few weeks will be largely preoccupied with the excitement over the nominations for the presidential elections, the economic situation promises to be grim and critical.

Indications of the turbulence ahead are already available, and it is extremely shortsighted on the part of the government to fight shy of taking the public into confidence about the magnitude of the imminent crisis. The occasion for a candid over-view of the difficult economic situation was provided by the two-day meeting of the National Development Council, but neither the Prime Minister nor the Finance Minister cared to place before the Chief Ministers the government's assessment of the economy as it looks today, and what it proposes to do in the near future.

Instead, the Centre's pronouncements before the NDC was largely ritualistic, though there were significant hints about the hazards of total subservience to the market. On this point, the Prime Minister was more forthcoming than any of his Ministers. He made it clear that "we cannot rely on the market to fulfil the minimum needs of our people". Compare this with the last year's euphoric adulation of the market as providing the panacea for all our economic problems. Not that the bias towards the market, as the mainspring of the economy has vanished, as could be seen from the Finance Minister's intervention in the NDC. His homily to the State Governments amounted to a call for privatisation. In all his observations in the last one year, Dr Manmohan Singh has been extremely circumspect about the need to provide adequate resources for social security particularly for the deprived and distressed in the community. Rather, his clear hint to slash down, if not eliminate, Dearness Allowance is a serious warning signal for a vast section of the organised labour. Its political implication is explosive and it is doubtful, to say the least, if this government is in a position to face that formidable challenge.

This session of the NDC was marked by critical interventions by Chief Ministers—more than perhaps at any previous session. Not only the West Bengal Chief Minister who raised some important issues of a basic nature, it needs to be noted that the Chief Ministers of States ruled by non-Congress parties all insisted on consultations for formulation of the terms of reference for the Finance Commission and wanted the outlay for rural development to be transferred to the States. In short, there was a general demand for greater decentralisation of financial powers. In contrast, the very tenor of the Finance Minister's stand at the NDC was pronouncedly against any concessions to the States—in other words, maintaining an iron grip of the Centre over the economy as a whole. There was no inclination for a cooperative approach in dealing with the difficult economic problems.

Herein is the essence of today's political malaise. As the political leadership at the Centre is getting debilitated because of its own infirmities and incapacity, it tends to hold on to power as if the solution lies in over-centralisation. The maxim that more powers for the States does not weaken but strengthens the Centre, is totally lost sight of. This is the reason why the Sarkaria Report has been left unimplemented, despite the fact that it was drawn up within the framework of the existing system.

This obsession for centralism is not a sign of strength of the political leadership at the Centre. Rather it betrays a sense of insecurity on its part. A national leadership confident about its own position would have, by now, gone in for genuine shedding of Central powers in favour of the States. It is only the weak and the insecure in politics who tend to assert their leadership by stretching the constitutional provisions to the utmost, if not absurd, limits to justify their own position, while a wise leadership at the helm would not hesitate to go in for a working partnership between the Centre and the States.

Jyoti Basu's suggestion at the NDC for the Centre to take the States into confidence in the matter of mounting external debts need not have been shot down on the ground of the constitutional right of the Centre alone to contract external loans, but an innovation could have been introduced by the Central Government getting the endorsement of the States for such back-breaking liabilities. No constitutional provision stands in the way of the Prime Minister discussing such issues of vital national concern with the Chief Ministers. Calibrewise, and also in terms of national commitment, it can hardly be claimed that the present members of the Central Cabinet are superior to the Chief Ministers.

One can of course understand why the Finance Minister would be scared of making a clean breast before the State Chief Ministers about the fresh commitments about to be made to the Fund Bank authorities for securing fresh loans. Next month, there will be a fresh letter of intent with the IMF, and then on more of begging bowl approach, as the economy under Manmohanomics is now going to be thoroughly addicted to external debts. In the name of getting over the last year's balance-of-payments crisis, what the Finance Minister has neatly planned is to take the country straight into the debt trap. The promised rise in exports—the main reason for the devaluation of the rupee—has not taken place at all, while the imports have been liberalised. An excellent alibi for more loans, and yet more loans to come. Meanwhile, a bogus claim is being made about the government having built up an impressive foreign exchange reserve—which in the main is an inventory of loans secured with little of export earnings.

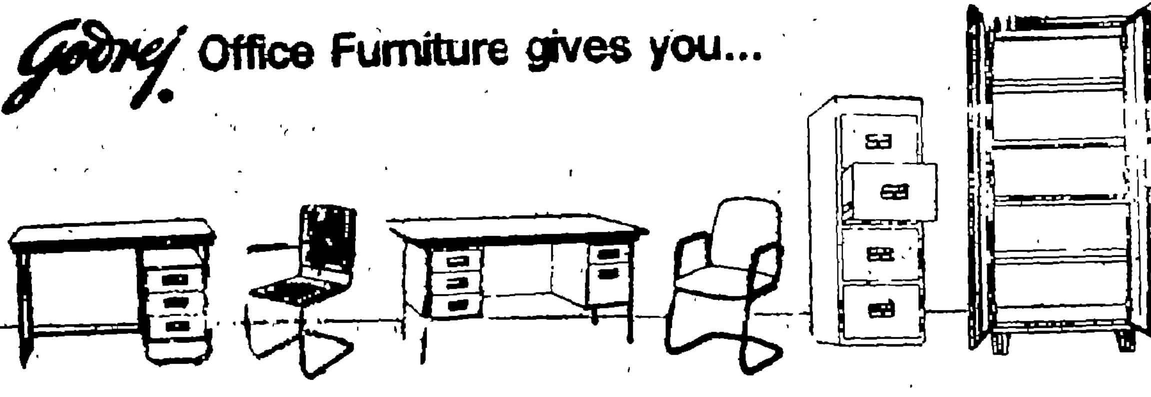
The insistence of the Fund-Bank authorities for a full-fledged market economy will result in fresh hike in prices of petroleum products, including LPG, a sharp cut in subsidies for fertiliser and raising of foodgrain prices even for the PDS shops. Meanwhile, the government's food procurement drive has been precariously poor, and according to some reports, it may be compelled to import about four million tonnes of wheat to manage the PDS—not a very impressive record for a government that claims to work. Add to all this, the World Bank insistence on imposing the Exit-policy, which has become a frightening spectre for the government at the political level.

More serious for the government to sell its new economic policy to the public is the scandal of the multi-crore scam which has shaken the entire banking sector of the country. With Dr Manmohan Singh's glib talk about freeing the stock exchange—which he claimed would not disturb his sleep—this disgraceful episode clearly points the accusing finger at the working of the Reserve Bank (or more appropriately, its misdoings) under its present high-profile Governor who is one of the aggressive exponents not only of the free-market economy but of dependence on large-scale foreign borrowing. Why can't there be a thorough investigation into the functioning of the Reserve Bank alongwith that of all the major banks, some of which are known to be in the red?

With all the tall talk about the virtues of the private sector and the mismanagement of the public sector that the establishment, particularly the Finance Ministry, has been ceaselessly indulging in for the last one year, it must have come as a heart-break to them that the great house of the Tatas should be the scene of an ugly civil war, in which the high and mighty are directly involved. All the talk of the rocklike stability of the corporate sector as the sheet-anchor of the Manmohanomics seems to turn out to be puerile in the face of the wars of the roses in the Tata House.

Where then is the moral strength of the new economic regime of the present government? ■

May 28



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Central Theme: Not Ecology

CONTROL OF GLOBAL RESOURCES

VIBODH PARTHASARATHI

The Earth Summit at Rio begins on June 2, 1992. This article is being published in that context.
—Editor

The meeting of the SAARC Environment Ministers in Delhi in early April and the G-77 conference in Kuala Lampur later in the month were seen as strategic meetings to unite potential allies from the South for the main battle at Rio this June. On the Rio agenda are the setting of time-tables to control global climate change, discussions hinged around the economics and ecology concerning bio-diversity, the adoption of the Earth Charter and action plan, the now infamous Agenda 21, as a blueprint for global environmentalism. However, these have been severely muted during the four Preparatory Committee meetings (Prepcoms) hitherto, as no sooner were deliberations initiated than it was discovered that each issue was a bone of contention between the North and the South.

In an attempt to break the impasse in the North-South dialogue the Union Environment Minister speaking in Kuala Lampur listed what India saw as the four essential ingredients to a new global partnership hopefully to emerge from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). These are. no distinction to be made in Agenda 21 between environment and development, and, between global and national concerns, a massive programme of regreening rather than just the containment of pollution, a stronger role for the UN in dealing with these mechanisms, and, the economic and social issues arising out of these linkages to be made transparent and accountable.

The point concerning the Rio-born "agreements" to be strongly monitored and implemented by the UN, is causing most anxiety to those familiar with the dynamics of international politics. To understand this, it may be worthwhile to analyse the history of international politics in the twentieth century. There have been numerous instances wherein attempts have been made to give birth to an international regime, under the leadership of the North. While attempting to achieve this, many a pretext have been selected to procreate such a global super-government: the UN under the pretext of international harmony, IUCN/WWF for the conservation of natural heritage, the NPT for a nuclear-safe world, and currently the GATT for boosting international trade and finance. The essence of such transnational governments in the name of multilateral cooperation is but obviously to strengthen the North's hold over the South in all spheres—economy, trade, resources, culture, information, political institutions, leisure and so on.

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AS far as the architects of the UNCED are concerned, the Earth Summit at Rio is allegedly the biggest effort in the history of mankind to save the planet. The reality of the situation, however, forces one to draw an alternative inference. One would be living in a fool's paradise to believe that ecology is the subject in focus at Rio. The essence of the deliberations in the countdown towards Rio have been the control over global resources, an issue whose basis lies in global realpolitik and the economic balance of power. There is no reason to believe that the physical environment of Rio will have an effect on the content of the agenda as it stands hitherto. For anyone who has some idea of how humankind on this planet divided by nation-states behaves, Rio cannot be anything but one of the many recent venues to further formalise and elaborate the existing international balance of power—this time hinged around in the name of global environmentalism—to put it simply, a "Green" version of the GATT.

Behind the euphoria of the Earth Summit and the rhetoric of the world leaders therein, there seem to be waiting at Rio a legal and financial framework for resources to be controlled by the international regimes (read the World Bank, the UNDP, the UNEP), whose very origin and current existence is, needless to say, at the pleasure of the North. The role of Working Group III in the countdown towards Rio must be viewed in this respect This Working Group has been directed with the task of framing legal and institutional frameworks concerning the implementations of decisions arrived at in Rio. Surprisingly, the media seems to have underplayed the role of this Working Group at all the four Prepcoms.

The deliberations within the Working Group III will be the primary contributors towards arriving at the specific responsibilities of each country being actually turned into long-term, workable commitments on their part. Consequently, this Group was to discuss over 100 treaties, protocols, conventions and declarations pertaining to the environment ranging from the 1959 Antarctica Treaty to the recent Montreal protocol. Naturally, the problem arising was which of these to include and which to ignore. In the last ten months it was observed that the US rather cleverly wanted additional treaties to be included so as to not only extend the time spent on the hitherto unfruitful discussions

The author, a free-lance writer, is an environmental activist.

but also to dilute the overall nature of the deliberations—a rather subtle but sure mechanism to ensure one's own interests are not encroached upon.

Whatever little that may emerge from Working Group III to be put forward at the Earth Summit, will be nothing but a further indication of the degree of success the North has achieved in substantiating its hold over the South through the UNCED. The past record clearly shows that in the name of global environmentalism the North has done nothing but extorted guarantee from some nations of the South regarding the latter's limitation on, for example, the consumption of energy and harnessing of forest resources. As one had imagined, the North, on its part, had time and again stayed away from giving any commitments on these very issues.

The case of the so-called Tropical Forestry Action Plan (TFAP) goes to highlight the potential dangers of control by a transnational regime over natural resources. The idea of the TFAP is to provide a "neutral" international organisation with the rights of monitoring and when required, intervening in the conceptualisation as well as implementation of domestic forest policies in the signatory countries. It is pertinent to mention that throughout the South, issues related to forestry have strong implications at the quality of life of the lowest economic stratum of society at the micro-level. In addition, these issues are also pertinent to countries with economic interests like Malaysia and Brazil in the sphere of trade at the international level. Thus, such a "guiding hand" in the pretext of "greening the earth" is effectively neo-imperialism in the garb of popular environmentalism—similar to what Chakravarthi Raghavan has called "re-colonisation" by the North being attempted through the GATT.

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IN the light of the above realities, was the Union Environment Minister's novel gesture at Kuala Lumpur pertaining to afforestation a right move? For those who are unaware, Kamal Nath extended an invitation to the nations of the North to take up the afforestation of the wastelands in India. Did our Environment Ministry realise the essence of this magnanimity in terms of its long-term impact on our human ecology? To put the issue in a perspective, let us start from the beginning. In India, afforestation programmes have been largely, if not wholly, the domain of the state—through the Central, State or local administrative apparatus. However, recently the government has allowed the private sector into the greening of the cities—visible from the saplings planted along road dividers in cities with mini-boardings of the corporate sponsors. To add to this is this proposal of foreign institutions to sponsor afforestation programmes in the country, which is similar to the giving away of the "sick" public sector enterprises. First, such a proposal succeeds in driving into oblivion the socio-political reasons behind the emergence of 50 million hectares of wastelands in the country. This is nothing but another way, this time on the pretext of the UNCED, to divert attention from the dynamics of the genesis of a complex socio-ecological issues—deeply rooted as they are in the political institutions and economic structure of our society—by creating an euphoria in the name of foreign assistance as a "solution" to the "problem".

Secondly, this noble gesture by the Environment Minister seems to be a mere extension of the government's policy of liberalisation into the ecological arena, if one compares this with the turning over of "sick" public sector units into the hands of foreign/corporate enterprises. The fact remains that this is no different from the previous sponsored greening. This is because both the state and the corporate sector sponsored afforestation programmes, as will be the case with the foreign sector in the event of the proposal being cleared, are against the much regarded dictum of "people's participation". This notion suggests that any socio-ecological activity geared to improve the quality of life of the people inhabiting a region must be a subject centred in its mechanism. The people who are most to benefit from such afforestation—for their regular food, fodder, and fuelwood requirement at a non-commercial, usually domestic, level—must be involved at the planning and implementation stages of such efforts, as well as managing such commons on a long-term basis. If the government is genuinely interested in afforestation for the people, then the best way is to hand over the rights of wastelands to be afforested collectively to the people who are to benefit from it. But of course this is asking too much from the government!

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THIS leads to the emergence of a peculiar situation. On one hand, the governments of the countries in the South are battling it out against the North to freely harness natural resources within their geographical domain. On the other hand, these very governments in the South have been denying their people the right to use resources available in the micro-environment they inhabit. In other words, are the governments in the South in the name of democracy and environmentalism willing to concede the demands of their people, as voiced by the numerous socio-ecological movements, what they as sovereign governments of the South demand from the North in the same spirit.

Thus, it is likely that the Earth Summit is only the tip of the iceberg--the beginning of a long-drawn multi-pronged battle for the South to pressurise and make changes in the global politico-economic order. What is more, one can get a glimpse of this new world order concerning the planet's human ecology being given birth to in Rio in the guise of "our common future". To begin with, the definition of "our" will emerge more implicitly from this Order. Following which, the post-Rio framework will only further challenge the very basis of the sovereignty of weaker nation-states of the South in the North-South arena. Given the current functioning of democracy and the degree of Centralised control of local resources in the nations of the South, one can very well envisage the undoubtedly far-reaching impact of this Order, backed as it is by powerful international regimes, on the daily lives of the people. But the people in the South seem to have become used to their lives being governed by "agreements" resulting from closed door deliberations among select people, as is the case with the UNCED. The question is when are the people in the South going to politically assert themselves against national as well as transnational elites to take charge of "their common future"? ■

This week, on May 27, 1964, Jawaharlal Nehru passed away.

Remembering Jawaharlal Nehru Today

G. PARTHASARATHI

Jawaharlal Nehru used to say that "at the present moment there is no more exciting place to live in than India".

On one occasion, in the mid-fifties, he explained what he meant, in an address to the students of the Indian Institute of Technology at Kharagpur. He asked the audience to recall that he had used the word "excitement" and not "comfortable" or some such soothing words in talking about India as a place to live in.

Panditji explained that India faced many problems, and that much remained to be accomplished by the Indian people. India would, therefore, be a hard place to live in--and therein lay the excitement. There was not much scope for soft living in India, he said. Soft living made for a rather dull life. However, Panditji went on, "there is any amount of room in India for living a hard, exciting, creative and adventurous life."

Excitement, in the sense that Panditji used the word, is what is generated when a group connected with building an edifice, or an industry or a university--or a people set on the task of building their nation—get imbued with a lofty vision. It was such a vision that animated our people during the struggle for freedom under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. It remained clear enough and strong enough to enable us to get over the trauma of partition, to set significant goals, and to move forward with our heads held high.

Panditji sought to nurture a lofty vision by offering our people the excitement and adventure of a hard life. If they would involve themselves, as he put it, in "working for India, building India, creating things here...." While there were doubters and waverers, our people, by and large, were uplifted by the vision he inspired and responded to his call for faith in the country's future. For independence, for self-respect, and for self-reliance.

Nehru was well aware that it would be unrealistic to expect that the process thus begun would be automatically self-perpetuating. The obstacles and pitfalls were many and varied. He acknowledged that the life of an individual--and even more so, the course of a nation—cannot be at all time a straight line, but will be a curve with its ups and downs. Periods of steady advance may be followed by spells of difficulties and disorganisation. To prepare the people for a united effort at nation-building, Panditji called upon them to contemplate the history of India, and to reflect on factors that had contributed to great achievements in certain periods, and to backwardness and stagnation in certain others. He pointed out that our forefathers in ancient times had many great achievements to their credit because they looked on the world around them with clear eyes and positive goals. They kept "the windows of their mind" open to give and take and, thereby, reinforced their self-confidence to take on bigger tasks. In contrast, when our people, for whatever reason, tended to develop a narrow outlook, India suffered a setback, politically and culturally, Panditji emphasised.

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PANDITJI'S lifelong crusade for the propagation of secular values should be understood in this context. He believed that the pace of nation-building—indeed, the wellbeing and the very survival of the nation itself--would depend on the extent to which our people got imbued with secular values. We need to be clear about the meaning that Panditji himself attached to what he regarded as secular values. Panditji worried that the English word "secularism" was a rather feeble one that failed to convey adequately a truly grand conception--a way of life that, in his view, India was best equipped to exemplify to the rest of the world.

Let me cite what Panditji had written about his concept of secularism:

> We call our state a secular one. The word 'secular' perhaps is not very happy one. And yet, for want of a better, we have used it. It does not mean a state where religion as such is discouraged. It means freedom of religion and conscience, including freedom for those who may have no religion.

Panditji went on to add:

> The word 'secular', however, conveys something much more to me, although that might not be its dictionary meaning. It conveys the idea of social and political equality. Thus a caste-ridden society is not properly secular.

To move our society towards becoming truly secular by progressively weakening the stranglehold of caste, and mitigating irrational distrust and hostility between groups professing different religious faiths, was a task to which Panditji attached the highest importance.

I have long been of the view that Nehru's elevated concept of secularism as an equitable and humane social order in which persons professing different faiths live in fraternal amity, marks a significant step forward in India's intellectual heritage. Nehru's starting point was not religion, but science and rational thought. He saw poverty and ignorance as the consequence as well as the perpetuating cause of injustice, oppression and inequality. It was through education and through economic and social change that the disadvantaged masses could be rescued from vulnerability to the exploitation of religious sentiment by vested interests. I have always believed that schools have a crucial role to play in instilling constructive values in the minds of the young because socialisation at an impressionable age begins in schools.

The task is also one to which the government and political activists should give continuing attention in order to mobilise public opinion. To Nehru secular values constituted the indispensable foundation for the unity of India and surest guarantee for its progress in every field of endeavour.

Nehru who was so deeply committed to the brotherhood of man, looked beyond our planet and found solace in contemplating the universe, with everything in it forming an organic whole. In one of his *Letters to Chief Ministers* he spoke of the desirability of keeping in view the old Vedantic conception of the life force "which is the inner base of everything that exists". He went on to add:

> If we really believed in this all-pervading concept of the principle of life, it might help us to get rid of some of our narrowness of race, caste or class and make us more tolerant and understanding in our approaches to life's problems.

He was very conscious of the hurdles that beset his path, but it was not in his nature to seek any respite from his unceasing endeavour "to appeal to the better angels" in the hearts of our people, to borrow a phrase from Abraham Lincoln.

Panditji was intensely concerned with the present—the here and now. However, he invariably sought to review the issues of the present through the prism of the past, while he also pondered over the implications of any course for the unity and progress of the nation and its people. Such had also been the approach of the great sages and teachers of our antiquity.

That posture, consciously evolved and held, precludes hasty or impetuous action that may result in undesirable consequences. That postures also comes out of a deep faith in democracy that rests on a citizenry able to receive unhindred a variety of views and historical experiences, and to work its way towards a broad consensus.

It is the task of political leaders in a properly functioning democratic constituional system to sustain such educational activity, debate and discussion, as to promote the broadest possible agreement. The process will mean at some point that the consent of the citizenry has been obtained and that the country is ready to try out a suggested course.

That was Panditji's approach. He was, of course, impatient to see the nation move forward at a faster pace in several areas that he considered urgent and important. He was tireless in explaining the issues to the people with noteworthy persuasiveness and objectivity. But his commitment to democracy and to the concept of receiving the willing consent of the people, always influenced the nature and pace fo changes to be implemented through legislation.

To Nehru, democracy and the socialism he envisaged had to go together. He believed that they would be mutually reinforcing elements. He fully realised that his method took longer than a course of adopting short-cuts to bring about social change by imposition but he was convinced that the results would be more enduring and wholesome. This deep sensitiveness to democracy resting on the consent of the people was intertwined in his mind with Gandhiji's insistence on the precedence of means over ends. Such an approach he believed was not merely an ethical one, but for India a practical proposition. Ever concerned with national unity, he declared that in India "an appeal to violence is particularly dangerous because of its disruptive character". He was patient with those who expressed disappointment over his unwillingness to use his immense prestige and influence to bring about a much more radical transformation of our society and economy. His interaction with such critics, as well as with those holding the very opposite views, was always on a very civilised plane. Central to his decision-making was his profound concern not to push, before the time was ripe.

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IF we reflect on recent developments in other parts of the world, we may acquire a clearer understanding of the fact that his posture was profoundly wise and farsighted. In order to get a clearer perspective of Panditji's extraordinary breadth of outlook, depth of thinking, willingness to give fair consideration to varying points of view, and firmness in adhering to his convictions—in short, to savour in good measure the humanistic faith to which he anchored himself—we should read his own works—*The Autobiography* and *Discovery of India*, to start with. One may also, whenever one feels the urge to seek communion with a humane thinker, who was also a man of action and the Prime Minister of a vast nation, turn to the pages in the recently-published volumes of Panditji's *Letters to Chief Ministers*. The letters, which came to be known as the "fortnightlies", represent a unique source that will enable us to see how Nehru's mind worked in analysing and dealing with the immense problems, both domestic and external, that he faced.

I may add that Panditji himself would never, for a moment, have contended that his appraisals and suggestions should be accepted as the only valid ones for all time. He would have hoped that the present generation would objectively analyse his appraisals, revitalise them whenever necessary to meet the requirements of today, and work out solutions that would reinforce the unity of the country and the progress of its people in the years that lie ahead.

Those who go directly to his works, and reflect on his words, will encounter a remarkable openness of mind, a deep yearning for fairness and objectivity, and even self-critical introspection. They will find little narrowness, rigid dogmatism, unfair characterisations or abrasive evaluations. They will also find out how current and relevant his words sound in the context of debates that are taking place in many countries at this time. Let me offer only a few illustrative examples.

Panditji reflected on the possible negative effects of modern technological changes that might lead young people to pursue a self-indulgent hedonism. He said:

> These tendencies are present more in the developed and advanced societies than in India and other under-developed countries. But it is important to note them because similar forces are likely to affect our life too.

The great importance that Nehru gave to the development of science and technology is well-known. He pointed with pride to the people of India "rooted in the remote past", marching forward with resolute steps in science and technology. He repeatedly stressed that the progress in science and technology should be combined with the progress of the mind and spirit. He stressed the point eloquently in the Azad Memorial Lecture of 1958 "We cannot," said Nehru, "be untrue to science because that represents the basic fact of life today. Still less can we be untrue to those principles for which India has stood in the past throughout the ages."

Characteristically, Panditji anxiously reflected on the implications of a decline in the study of the humanities in various countries, including our own. What would be the result of increasingly fierce competition among industrially advanced countries to gain an edge over each other in technology, especially the technology of warfare? In one of his letters to Chief Ministers after a visit to the West, Panditji wrote:

> Everywhere there is greater demand for intensive science education. ... Education will be more and more scientific, but not in the spirit or temper of science. It will be concentrated on the development of power. There will be less and less of humanism and classical studies, and the proud culture built up through hundreds of years of cultural effort will decay. ...This is the prospect before us, and only some mighty upheaval in human thinking can change this drift.

In these words one hears the voice of a world citizen who cares deeply for the advancement of culture and civilisation to enrich the lives of human beings everywhere.

Panditji gave anxious thought to the evolution of an informed citizenry capable of evaluating the panaceas put forth by political parties and participating effectively in the electoral process. He said:

> It amazes me that some people in this age of swift transition should still cling to ideas which have no relevance today, should be attracted to communalism and provincialism; and should be powerfully influenced by caste. It is distressing that elections should turn on caste and communal aspects. ...Many of our opposition parties, and sometimes even the Congress, approached the elections in a narrow way.

Here one finds a man who does not turn his face away from reality, who agonises the deficiencies that he perceives, who does not shirk self-criticism, and who, in that process, strengthens his resolve to strive to bring about improvements.

Panditji had differed with his leader and mentor, Mahatma Gandhi, on the issue of industrialisation. He was not disposed to go along with many other distinguished associates who were ready to accept Gandhiji's emphasis on the development of rural-based handicrafts and small scale industry rather than on heavy industry.

We find Panditji, a few days after the outbreak of the Second World War, reflecting on the future of the world and of his own India, and arguing that India should not fail to take advantage of what he called "the big machine".

Nehru said:

> It cannot conceive of the world or of any progressive country doing away with the big machine. Even if this were possible, this would result in lowering production tremendously and thus in reducing standards of life greatly. For a country to do without industrialisation would lead to that country falling a prey, economically or otherwise, to other more industrialized nations, which would exploit it.

As Prime Minister he undertook the challenging task of evolving a strategy of development in a democratic and mixed-economy framework.

Several countries that chose to adopt a different framework are now in the process of moving towards that of Panditji. His framework envisaged a strong public sector to set up urgently needed new industries, a vigorous private sector to tap enterprise and resources, and an efficient small enterprise sector to stimulate entrepreneurial and technical skills, increased production, and wider employment opportunities. While he recognised the value of developing and encouraging entrepreneurial skills, he was very conscious of the negative consequences of monopolies for socialism and democracy.

Contrary to the views expressed by some commentators, Panditji reflected deeply about such issues as efficiency, productivity, acccountability, and updating of technology in government-owned enterprises. He sought to alert government officials, Parliament, plant managers, and the general public to the continuing need to find suitable ways to meet problems. From the outset he called upon executives and workers in each industry to regard it as "a big university where we can work and, while working learn, so that we may do bigger things".

He reminded Parliament in 1956 that "when one deals with a plant and an enterprise where quick decisions are necessary, which may make a difference between success and failure, the way a government functions is not sometimes suitable". "Therefore," he continued, "we have to evolve a system for working public enterprises where, on the one hand, there are adequate checks and protection, and on the other, enough freedom for that enterprise to work quickly and without delay". Panditji exhorted members of Parliament to desist from frequent sniping at even minor lapses in the performance of the enterprises and from the tendency to find scapegoats. He warned that if members did not address themselves to issues with a full sense of responsibility, the successful functioning of enterprises would be adversely affected. Managers would tend to play for safety and would be disinclined to undertake promising experimentation or initiate desirable activities that might not be proof against failure in some respects.

Panditji's views on the role of universities have a contemporary relevance. He believed that in the continuing struggle against narrow parochialism and bigotry, and in the task of nation-building, universities had a very important role. He urged teachers as well as students to set up high standards in their work and in their activities. If that consciousness was lacking or suffered erosion, a university would be a house of learning built on shifting sands, he observed.

Nehru cautioned against the lights getting dim in the universities themselves:

> But if the temple of learning itself become a home of narrow bigotry and petty objectives, how then will a nation prosper or a people grow in stature?

I have touched on only a few issues that Nehru had concerned himself with in his many-splendoured career. Next only to the Mahatma, he was the most inspiring leader of our national movement. As Prime Minister he strove to transform our ancient country, with a colonial past, into a modern state and to promote economic growth and social development. As we reflect on the historic role of Jawaharlal Nehru and the richness of his legacy, we realise more than ever before, that his message was for the world and not for India alone.

We recall what Nehru said on August 15, 1947:

> It is fitting that at this moment we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and to the still larger cause of humanity.

This sentiment expressed the ethos of our national movement which saw the struggle for our independence as part of the quest for a democratic world order, a global view inspired by Jawaharlal Nehru himself. The objectives of our foreign policy, which were set out and implemented, were derived from a fundamental faith in peace, political independence and economic equality. This led to a policy of non-alignment with power blocs, opposition to imperialism and colonialism in all their manifestations and a struggle against racial and social discrimination to secure respect for the dignity and worth of the human person.

It is not necessary to elaborate on the profound impact that Jawaharlal Nehru made on sensitive minds throughout the world by his crusade for peace and disarmament, especially nuclear disarmament, nor on the crucial role that he played during the grim years of the Cold War in reducing tensions and bringing about constructive cooperation between the opposing sides. His sincere and passionate advocacy of peaceful coexistence has borne fruit over the years. He was respected by everyone as an outstanding world statesman.

Today we face serious difficulties and challenges. The country will be well-served if there problems are met and dealt with by us with the values that Panditji sought to inculcate and the kind of approach that he exemplified in his eventful career. The life and thought of our great leader will remain a source of inspiration to us for long years to come.■

(This is taken from the author's address at the Foundation Day of Jawaharlal Nehru University (November 20, 1990) of which he was the founder Vice-Chancellor.)

Political Economy of the Uruguay Round of Trade Negotiations–I

MUCHKUND DUBEY

This is a detailed analysis of the Uruguay Round of Trade Negotiations written by our former Foreign Secretary, who is now a Professor, South Asian Division, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. It will be carried in instalments.

—Editor

The idea of a new round of trade negotiations was mooted by the developed countries, particularly the United States, in the early 1980s. The developing countries were reluctant to get involved in another round of trade negotiations so soon after the last round, that is, the Tokyo Round of trade negotiations in 1979 from which their gains had been rather limited and of a dubious character. They believed that the GATT should concentrate on accomplishing the task remaining after the Tokyo Round, of removing the asymmetry of their position in the world trading system rather than launching a new round of trade negotiations.

They were also highly apprehensive of the efforts of the developed countries at the 1982 GATT Ministerial Meeting to bring on the GATT agenda new areas of negotiations such as Services, Trade-Related Investment Measures (TRIMs) and Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs). In the Programme of Action that emerged at the end fo the Ministerial Meeting, the developing countries succeeded in substantially underplaying the new areas introduced by the developed countries and keeping the limelight focussed on the issues of interest to them.

The developed countries, while paying lip-service to the part of the 1982 programme relating to the trading problems of the developing countries, used the Programme as a launching pad for a new round of trade negotiations. The developing countries realised that this was going to be a negotiation in which they had all to lose and nothing to gain and in which they were the givers and the developed countries the demandeurs. They knew by their past experience that the negotiations would not yield any positive results in the only area of interest to them, that is, market access, including that for textiles. They, therefore, tried to resist the bandwagon of the new round as long as they could. And when they were ultimately obliged to yield in Punta del Este in 1986 when the Uruguay Round was launched, they tried to safeguard their interests by ensuring that:

(a) in Services, any regime to be established shall respect the policy objectives of national laws and regulations applying to services;

(b) in TRIPs, the negotiations shall be confined to clarifying the GATT provisions and elaborating as appropriate new rules and disciplines;

(c) in TRIMs, the purpose of the negotiations will be to examine the operation of the GATT rules related to the trade restrictive and distorting effects of investment measures and to elaborate further provisions that may be necessary to avoid such adverse effects on trade;[1]

(d) the negotiations on Goods and those on Services proceeded on two separate tracks so that the possibility of cross-retaliation (that is, retaliation by way of withdrawing or withholding concessions on trade in goods for lack of compliance with the liberalisation commitment in Services) could be avoided.

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THE initiative for launching the Uruguay Round was taken when the economies of major developed countries were still reeling under the severe recession of 1980 and 1981 and when all projections showed a relatively slower rate of growth for these economies in the coming years. Such a low rate of growth was not sufficient to sustain the high standard of living that the people in these countries had got used to and the social security system that had become the hallmark of the Western civilisation and enabled these countries to make the long postponed massive investment in their infrastructure. There was a decline in the productivity and competitiveness of the US economy partly due to the staggering level of its military expenditure fuelled by the Cold War and the cult of nuclear deterrence. What was at stake for the United States and some of its close allies was their way of life and their hold over the world power structure.

Due to constraints of a political and institutional nature—the compulsion to continue the arms race, unwillingness to reduce profiligate consumption, rigidity of the wage structure, power of domestic lobbies, etc.—these countries, and the United States in particular, were not in a position to bring about the structural changes in their economies which could have put them on a path of higher rates of growth. They, therefore, decided to resort to external means as a substitute for domestic structural adjustment. The Uruguay Round was thus conceived as a shot in the arm of the economies of these countries.

Just as the very low rate of savings of the United States was sought to be compensated by the massive inflow of the Japanese surplus, similarly the recurring balance-of-payments deficits and declining competitiveness of the US economy was sought to be compensated by a combination of coercive bilateral measures and the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations to create expanding space for the goods and services, including capital, of the US multinational corporations in the markets of other countries. If Super and Special 301 was, to borrow a phrase from Mrs Carla Hills, a crowbar to pry open the markets of developing countries, the Uruguay Round was the sustained heavy pressure leading to the ultimate collapse of the resistance to the entry of the US goods and services in these markets.

In the early 1980s there was also a perception in the United States that while it had become less competitive in the world in trade in goods, it still had a decisive competitive edge in the field of services. That partly explained the US insistence on bringing trade in services and TRIMs within the scope of the new round of trade negotiations. However, as negotiations proceeded, the US went on slipping behind in competitiveness in the realm of services also. The US, therefore, subsequently became somewhat lukewarm about making far-reaching liberalisation commitments in at least some of the services—particularly financial and communication services.

The only area in which the US still perceives itself to be competitive and hence the scope for substantially improving its market access, is agriculture. Here its interest coincides with that of some of the other low-cost agricultural producing countries, including some developing countries. That is why agriculture became such a key issue in the negotiations, leading to a breaking of rank among the developing countries.

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IN forcing the Uruguay Round, with their agenda and approach for the Round, on the developing countries, the developed countries fully exploited the extreme vulnerability of the economies of these countries and the consequent disarray among them. By the time the Uruguay Round was launched, more than half the developing countries had become dependent on the developed countries and international financial institutions, that is, the IMF and the World Bank, for repeated rescheduling of their debts and the NAM and the Group of 77 had ceased to be forums for effective joint action.

The developing countries adopted very strong, eloquent and extensive statements reiterating their common position on the main aspects of the Uruguay Round through the platform of the South Commission, in the NAM Ministerial Meeting in Nicosia and the Summit in Belgrade and in the various declarations of the Group of 77. But at each critical moment of trial during the negotiations, they wilted under bilateral pressure and gave up their common position. Thus what they perceived in the moment of inspiration to be in their interest they wilfully sacrificed in the moment of desperation under bilateral pressure. Subsequently, they erected a whole edifice of rationalisation to prove how the demands of the developed countries in Services, TRIPs and TRIMs were best calculated to serve their own interest.

It was also argued by the developed countries that the multilateral trading system would collapse if the Uruguay Round was not allowed to be launched or concluded to the satisfaction of the developed countries. It was repeatedly stated that what was at stake was the very future of the liberal trading system. The threat was held out that if the negotiations were not concluded the way the developed countries wanted, the protectionist forces in the United States would become stronger and protectionist measures against the export of developing countries will be intensified.

The United States held out yet another threat and it was that if a multilateral trading system after its image did not emerge from the Uruguay Round of Negotiations, there would be multiplication of the kind of exclusive trading arrangement that the US was concluding with Canada, Mexico, etc. Consequently, the US would quit the GATT system which would become fragmented by special trading arrangements of the kind being concluded by the United States, and developing countries outside such arrangements would be the worst sufferers.

The Uruguay Round of Trade Negotiations are different from all previous rounds of trade negotiations under the GATT in several ways. First, these were the only round of trade negotiations in which the developing countries did not perceive any interest of their own, at least till recently. Secondly, these were the first GATT negotiations in which the target was, apart from seeking the liberalisation of agriculture of the European Community, the markets of a dozen or so more developed among the developing countries. Finally, these were also the first GATT negotiations whose scope covered areas not lying within the jurisdiction of the GATT.

During the course of the negotiations in their earlier phase, the developing countries undertook a damage limitation job in the new areas and sought to achieve some positive results in the traditional areas, particularly market access.

In Services, they tried to safeguard their nascent service industries and seek access in those where they had some competitive advantage. In TRIPs, they tried to keep norms and standards of the protection of intellectual property rights (IPRs) outside the negotiations. In TRIMs, they did not want to discuss investment measures *per se*, but were prepared to discuss the effect of investment measures on trade. They sought to improve the access for their textile exports. And they wanted the regimes on Services, TRIPs and TRIMs to be lodged outside the GATT so as not to permit cross-retaliation.

II

The Dunkel Draft

In Punta del Este, it was envisaged that the negotiations would be concluded by the end of 1990. However, when the negotiations dragged on for one year more and a number of important issues still remained to be resolved, Arthur Dunkel, the Director-General of the GATT, presented a Draft Final Act (DFA) embodying what he thought could be the result of the Uruguay Round. This was offered as a Single Treaty no single element of which can be considered as agreed until the total package is agreed.

This package does not enable the developing countries to attain any of the objectives which they pursued during the best part of the negotiations. The package severely militates against India's interest. It is a far cry from the brief originally given to the Indian delegation. It goes against the letter and spirit of several of our existing laws. And it may have the effect of abridging our economic sovereignty, upsetting our development priorities, particularly the programmes for the poorest, and inhibiting the pursuit of self-reliant growth. In the analysis that follows, we are examining the implications of the texts of the instruments relating to some of the major areas of negotiations, that is, the TRIPs, TRIMs, Services, Agriculture, Textiles and Multilateral Trade Organisations, to bring out their implications for India's trading and economic interest.

A. TRIPs

The text on TRIPs in the DFA totally ignores the position of the developing countries like India and is a complete let down for them. It imposes on the developing countries the most stringent norms and standards for protecting intellectual property rights prevalent in the developed countries. It calls for a total revamping of the existing laws on this subject in India.

Let it be clear right from the beginning that the protection of intellectual property rights is no part of the edifice of a liberal trading system. Instead of making a trade regime more liberal, such a protection can have the effect of rendering the trade regime more restrictive. There are instances where liberal trade regimes have coexisted with low level of protection of intellectual property and very high norms and standards for the protection of intellectual property rights have co-existed with highly restrictive trade regimes.

For example, before the enforcement of *status quo* reciprocity (that is, not to maintain existing market access) under the threat of 301, low levels of intellectual property protection were prevalent in conjunction with relatively liberal trade and industrial policies in countries like South Korea, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Mexico, Argentina, Chile and Brazil. On the other hand, China today is providing, under the threat of 301, high level of intellectual property protection even though it is maintaining a trade regime which falls far short of being liberal.

In terms of economics, there is genuine ground to believe that the global welfare deteriorates with higher intellectual property protection. Alan V. Deardorff, in a paper prepared on this subject, has come to the conclusion that "extending patent protection to all countries of the world is unlikely to be globally optimal". He argues, on the basis of a theoretical model elaborated by him, that on extending patent protection, a society incurs costs in the form of monopoly profits paid to inventors. There is also distortion of consumer choice due to monopoly pricing. Deardorff argues that if patent protection were extended to all countries of the world, these costs would outweigh the benefits from the world point of view, so that global patent protection should be rejected on efficiency grounds. Further, since patent protection also involves a substantial transfer of welfare from the developing to the developed countries, it goes against equity consideration as well.

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THERE is no theoretical basis for the belief that higher patent protection provides an incentive for invention. There are in fact models which demonstrate that invention will suffer due to higher I P protection, because it is competition and not monopoly which provides spur to R and D activities. One of the economists who has studied this subject has come to the conclusion that "the *ex ante* inducement to R & D that *ex post* protection of IPR is meant to provide is largely an article of faith".

On the other hand, it is recognised that IPRs themselves can be a barrier to trade. This is recognised in the text on TRIPs in the very first paragraph of the Preamble which states:

> Desiring... to ensure that measures and procedures to enforce intellectual property rights do not themselves become barriers to legitimate trade.

This is further recognised in Article 8(2) of the Text which states:

> Appropriate measures...may be needed to prevent the abuse of intellectual property rights by right holders or the resort to practices which unreasonably restrain trade or adversely affect the international transfer of technology.

However, in spite of this eloquent recognition of the existence and nature of the problem, the text does not contain any enforceable measures to prevent such abuses.

The TRIPs text goes against the Patent Act of India, 1970, in practically all important respects. Its adoption by India will call for the scrapping of the 1970 Act and the enactment by Parliament of a new law altogether for patent protection. The following are some of the important differences:

(a) The Indian Act excludes nuclear energy, methods of agriculture and horticulture and bio-technological processes and products from patentibility. The DFA text and the TRIPs makes all those methods and products patentable.

(b) Under the Indian Act, only process patent can be granted to food, medicines, drugs and chemical products. If we accept the text on TRIPs, we will have to grant product patents in all these areas.

(c) The duration of patents according to the Indian Act is seven years for products for which only process patent is granted and 14 years for those for which product patent is granted. Under the TRIPs text, it will have to be 20 years in all cases.

(d) In the Indian Patent Act, there are draconian provisions for the compulsory working of patents and there is a provision even for the revocation of patents in the public interest. Applications for the grant of licence for compulsory working can be filed after the expiration of three years from the date of the sealing of a patent. In granting such a licence, all that the Controller has to do is to satisfy himself that "the reasonable requirements of the public with respect to the patented invention have not been satisfied or that the patented invention is not available to the public at a reasonable price". Once he is satisfied on these counts, the Controller can order a patentee to grant a licence under such terms as he deems fit. The Controller also can, on application by the government, give on a patent an endorsement of "licences of right". As regards food, medicines, drugs and chemicals, the process patent granted for them shall be deemed to be endorsed with the words "licence of right", which can be worked on the expiration of three years from the date of sealing of the patent. Finally, the Controller has the discretion to make the grant of compulsory licencing effective at any time without waiting for three years to expire.

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IN the text on TRIPs in the DFA, there are no specific provisions on compulsory licencing. The provision in Article 27(2) of the text that "patents shall be available and patent rights enjoyable... whether products are imported or locally produced", gives the impression that importation is as good as local production so far as the enjoyment of patent rights are concerned. In that event, the question of compulsory licensing for local production does not arise. In that context, it is not clear whether Article 31 of the Text "other Use Without Authorisation of the Right Holder" confers on a party the right of compulsory licencing. In any case, "other use without authorisation" prescribed in Article 31 is highly circumscribed.

(Continued on page 19)

Linking Technology to Human Values

V.S. ARUNACHALAM

The following is the convocation address by the author, the Scientific Adviser to the Defence Minister and Secretary, Department of Defence Research & Development, Ministry of Defence.

I am grateful to the Vice-Chancellor for inviting me to deliver this morning's convocation of the Institute of Technology of this famous University in the ancient and holy city of Varanasi. This city has been the cradle of human civilisation for over a few thousand years and has remained in the forefront of intellectual challenges. This is the centre for numerous religious revolutions and interpretations that have shaped and reshaped human faith and thinking. It is in this very city that many fundamental questions on the meaning of human life and the spirit which governs the intellect, have been asked by those great philosophers and thinkers, and some sought and reached their enlightenment almost as revelations. Gautama Buddha, Saint Shankara lived, meditated and preached from the banks of the holy river Ganga. It is, therefore, only appropriate that the great son of India, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya chose Varanasi as the site to establish a modern university for intellectual pursuits in every area of human endeavour. As universities go, Banaras Hindu University is a complete one: every discipline that forms a subset of human knowledge is represented here without any discrimination, and in many, the university due to its sheer brilliance and capability is a world leader, educating and enlightening thousands of eager students who throng to this campus from all parts of our country, and some from far off countries as well. I, therefore, consider the graduates of today's convocation to be fortunate to have had an enviable opportunity to live and study in this great university. Through centuries, millions of Indians have dreamed of performing pilgrimage to Varanasi, if not actually living and studying in these environs. You are lucky to have fulfilled the dreams of many of our ancestors by staying and studying here, that too in areas modern and relevant to the society we live in—Technology. My heartiest congratulations to you, and may I share with you the pride and happiness that you all feel today befitting the occasion.

Many of you, even by now, would have decided on what you are going to do in the near future. I expect some to study further either in this country or abroad, while many will look for a career in the government or in industries; some may even opt for the noble profession of teaching while others with initiative may stake a career of their own. Fortunately, in our country we have not felt the effects of a global recession, and the jobs for engineers and technologists are still relatively easy to come by. I wish you all the best in the coming years, and I am sure you will all do well. With all the pessimists prophysying doom, and with all its sham drudgery and broken dreams, ours is still a beautiful land with wonderful people, and please make the best use of it. For, the future belongs to you, and do not let opportunities to slip by, or challenges unanswered.

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WHILE talking about jobs, it is easy to forget the relevance of technology to the present-day world. In the past as we were a rural country, we were not fully aware of the potential of science and technology to alter the very structure of the society irreversibly. We were not sensitised to the opportunities of technology in generating jobs and in improving the quality of life, probably as we were not aware of the great potential within technology. This, to some extent, is due to our country not experiencing the fruits of industrial revolution first hand, and we are thus not aware of what tecchnology can do to improve the quality of life. Only now are we waking up to the realities of the marvels of technology: instant communication and availability of information to educate, entertain and enlighten; breathtaking advances in living sciences that have made human life safer and improving the quality of life of even an ordinary citizen, providing him and her with opportunities not dreamed of before. We are now ready to taste the fruits of technology.

Is technology as unlimited and enlightened as many claim, or are there sacrifices to be made on the way? This is a question I want to raise with you, not only because you are going to be the practising technologists of today and tomorrow, but also because of a hope that you will be able to make technology human. For, we should not forget that technology is our own creation and we must not allow that to overwhelm us. Slavery in any form is bad, and slavery to technology is no exception. We must, therefore, continue to be aware of the limits of technology and pattern our life accordingly.

First, let me discuss the positive side. Technology provides opportunities for the creation of work, wealth and welfare. These are important and so we must use technology to take our country up the industrial ladder. In spite of our country boasting of a large number of scientists, engineers, technologists, industrialists and entrepreneurs, we still are a very poor country almost at the bottom of the industrial league of nations. Illiteracy is rampant as also poverty. Even today, for many happiness is one square meal a day. For all practical purposes, for them the industrial revolution has not occurred. The only way for bringing all Indians to the fold of national well-being is through industrialisation: not by mindless building of smoke-stack industries imitating some country or another, but by a well-balanced industrialisation that takes into account the various strengths and weaknesses of our society. Only then, we will be able to take our country on the road to social justice and economic prosperity. We must industrialise more, we must produce and we must generate employment and create more opportunities. These, by themselves, will lead to better social justice and a more tolerant society. As you will be the prime movers of this industrialisation, there is a special responsibility vested in you to ensure that we do not stumble this time.

The American philosopher, Santayana once said, those who forget their past are condemned to relive it and we must, therefore, ask as to what was wrong, and for that matter, what was right with our industrialisation. True, since independence, we have industrialised in every area of national infrastructure we missed building in the past centuries, and these have paid off handsomely and made India industrialised. Alongwith these we build scientific and technological laboratories and educational institutions providing the country with qualified and technologic manpower. This is unique among many other developing countries, for nowhere else can one boast of such a talented manpower. In this respect we are on parity with other industrially developed countries. It is this strength which gives us the confidence in our scientific and technological programmes and also in the initiatives we have taken to enter some areas of new technology which promise handsome returns. This is how as it should be and we must be proud of these achievements. But, somehow, we seem to have lost our way in the middle. For, we have not been conscious that by its very nature technology is international, and to succeed we must compete, but fairly. We must outshine others in the quality of goods we manufacture and in their cost; we must be economical in materials we consume and treat the environment with care. If we were prepared for all these constraints, the very first industrial revolution the country experienced in the fifties and sixties would have become self-sustaining. This, the country could not do for a variety of reasons, some of which could not be helped, while some other should have been taken care of.

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TAKE, for instance, many of our industries which got their technology from abroad and which was adopted well for those countries, their raw materials and their work ethos. I am afraid we did not modify the imported know-how to suit local conditions, indigenous raw materials and practices. This could have been done if our industries and engineers had only spent time, money and effort to absorb the technologies in their innovation. How different are the Japanese who spend about five rupees to absorb and modify the technology bought for a rupee? India barely spends a rupee in absorption. No wonder indigenous products are inferior and costly. Our raw materials are incoherent with the processes employed and like an addict we continue to chase more and more know-hows as though they would answer many problems. Previously imported know-hows remain as sterile black boxes, unopened and un-understood. We thus lost a valuable experience for an entire generation of young engineers who could have helped the country to take-off from what was improted in the first place. This was the road the Japanese took and we could have followed this example as the country had the required qualified manpower unlike other newly industrialised countries with inadequate infrastructure.

There is yet another reason which has something to do with our education and training and the social infrastructure of the country. In engineering and technical education, there is still inadequate emphasis on practical training as also on quality and production engineering. These subjects are still considered unnecessary appendages that take the form more theoretical studies, and thus get very low priority. It is also an unfortunate fact that the Indian society is yet to value the dignity and the importance of manual labour. In the past, it was always relegated to the so-called Backward Classes and there was no pride either in manual labour or in product innovation. We thought that knowledge is only mental labour. And even engineers who should have known better, opted for the desk-jobs not realising that the technology at the shop-floor determined industrial and economic successes. Only now, the new generation of engineers, of which you are an example, are waking up to the demands of technology. Slowly, but surely, the society is rediscovering the merits of manual labour. This consciousness must spread further to transform the country to become a technologically formidable and industrially advanced nation with a combination of mental and manual strengths.

Technology thrives on competition. To perform better, we need options on products, processes and on costs. Unfortunately, the Indian industries have not until now faced serious competition except perhaps in defence. The market was a protected but a large one, insulated from external competition and thus providing a large internal one. If India had attempted to sell in international markets, she could have learnt the merits of competition. Instead, the industries chose the national market that was captive and unaccustomed to new technologies. It is this closed-door policy, which evolved first to protect the nascent indigenous industry, but later grew uncontrollably stifling innovation and competititon, that is responsible for the present poor industry performance. Only now are we waking up to the realities of technology: it is international and no amount of state support is adequate to protect archaic, irrelevant and unprofitable technologies.

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THERE are two areas concerning technology that I want to touch briefly. One concerns the national competence in science and technology, and the other a more philosophical one on the relevance of technology. The founding fathers of our nation, had rightfully emphasised the need to be self-reliant in science and technology and helped to build this infrastructure. This has not been easy, and could not have happened at all but for the political vision and also the commitment of thousands of engineers who opted to stay and build rather than migrate. Their lives had not been easy, with inadequate infrastructure, bureaucratic controls and often ill-informed public opinion. In spite of these they have persevered. Because of these sacrifices, our country has options in advanced technologies related to Atomic Energy, Space, and Defence. These are areas that may be vital not only to industrial growth, but even to our survival as a nation. If we had abandoned our efforts citing inter-dependence as a virtue in all areas, I fear we would have closed options in many areas including those in defence.

The right to possess technology should be a fundamental right of a country and this should not be denied. Otherwise, we may find ourselves in a position that even an indigenously cross-fertilised or genetically engineered plant is patented and thus cannot be cultivated except by a costly process of buying patents and obtaining approvals. Countries that do not possess the scientific manpower may succumb to these pressures, but a country such as ours should stand by the principle that technology is for the common weal and must, therefore, be diffused more freely unencumbered by controls and restrictions. Many developing countries look to India to provide a lead in this issue, and India must persuade those who believe in locking and controlling the diffusion of technologies to a trickle. This should be another reason for many of our engineers, technologists and universities to continue research and development pursuits. We are too big a country to live on borrowed know-how. Our selling should not remain with mere products, but should also include knowledge, expertise and know-how. This will also turn our country not only strong in defence but also in caring for other developing countries who lack the window of science and technology to solve some of their basic problems.

Is technology a panacea? Can it solve all human and societal problems? By its track-record to date, technology has been a great boon liberating humankind from ignorance, freeing it from the many ills and providing opportunities for gainful employment. Technology is mainly responsible for bringing in a consciousness that our planet is a

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Mobilising Resource

Towards A New Conceptualisation

ANANTA GIRI

Mobilising resource seems to be one of the most pressing concerns of our times. All societies are now confronted with the daunting task of mobilising more and adequate resources to meet the challenge of contemporary economic transformation and economic decline. We are now in the midst of a global economic restructuring with the transition from an industrial to a post-industrial economy. The post-industrial economies are characterised by the centrality of new technologies where labourers have to be skilled, knowledgeable and innovative.

The post-industrial transition even in the most advanced societies is not without its travails. Indeed the "Great-U-Turn" that entry into a post-industrial economy symbolises is leading to deindustrialisation, locational restructuring of the industries from the "snowbelt" to the "sunbelt" and, above all, to the decline of communities not to speak of the phenomenon of displacement and 'high tech and low pay' which an anthropologist has aptly called as "falling from Grace". The communities devastated by deindustrialisation are slowly striving towards remaking themselves, making their self and sites appropriate for post-industrial capital investment. In this context, we need to broaden our purview of the problem of and appeal for capital investment.

Though global media and their uncritical national adapters blow out of proportion in showing a Mikhail Gorbachev or a P.V. Narasimha Rao appealing to the post-industrial giants for investing in their countries and providing more technologies, the need for capital formation and resource mobilisation has been crucial even for different cities, communities and states in the United States—different cities in the United States now compete with each other not only for domestic investment, but also for international investment. But those American communities which do not have adequate local resources appeal to the Japanese for investment. Besides appeal for investment, these communities prepare themselves, retrain their manpower and, above all, try to link education with work through the creation of what a Harvard Business Professor, David Osborne, calls "post-industrial university". These post-industrial universities are centres of effective collaboration between research and industry, centres of continuing education for the workers.

Institutional Transformation

It is this aspect of the contemporary American striving that has much relevance in our contemporary India. We must create an institutional infrastructure to cope with the integration of our economy with the global post-industrial economy. Until now, our effort seems to be confined to restructuring the budget, but very little attention has been given to the most important question of institutional transformation and the creation of a new ethos. We waste so much time everywhere in bureaucratic cobwebs and besides delicensing what is required is a social revolution where we inculcate the spirit of the new work, its need for creativity, flexibility and incessant innovation. We also have to educate our workforce, reskill them and, above all, create a fruitful collaboration between industries and universities where technological innovations in the laboratory can diffuse to be profitable products in the industry. For this to happen, both the universities and the industries have to change a lot for which we do not have a glorious tradition.

People's Movements

Indeed, it is education that has to be the most important asset in mobilising resource. But this education is not simply to be confined to the university, but to be a people's education where the people themselves would have a knowledge of the resources that exist around and the potentialities that exist within. People's movements of various kinds in contemporary India are helping people not only to discover the resources within and to discover that they themselves are the ultimate resource, but also to create a "resource mapping" of the local areas which would widen their imaginative universe. People's science movements in contemporary India, after their continued laudable work in the field of adult literacy and popularisation of science, have now turned their energy to create a people's "resource mapping" and a people's guide to resource utilisation —Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad are the pioneering example here. The KSSP is involving experts and village volunteers together in the making of the local resource map which is believed to be a great asset in the much needed decentralisation of the planning process. If people know what resources exist in their locality, then when they get developmental grant for a panchayat, they would not simply spend that money in constructing a village road or a youth club, but they would use it for the better utilisation of the unused resources.

But besides acquainting people with resources that exist, people's movements are also striving to create a larger conception of resource which is not bound to reality, but a constituent of possibility. During an anthropological conversation with a sixty year old American lady who works in a transnational housing movement in India, told me: "When I was in school, I had a very physical view of resource. Oh, the resource of India meant all the mines that they have. But now by resource of India, I mean much more: her values, her family traditions and her people."

This has implication for understanding the nature of people's movements as well. Many of our scholars work with an either/or framework in their analysis of contemporary movements: either movements strive towards creating a new identity or strive towards the mobilisation of resources. But contemporary movements embody a dialectic of resource mobilisation and identity formation in as far as the identity of the actors of the movement becomes an asset in the mobilisation of resources. There is indeed a global widening of the meaning of the resource--from the physical to the intellectual and even to the spiritual.

Hence, in coming face to face with the challenge of mobilising resources, we also have to participate in a cognitive shift and in a transformation of consciousness with the equal emphasis upon the physical and the spiritual in our conceptualisation of ourselves and the conceptualisation of our resources. ■

MUCHKUND DUBEY: Uruguay Round

(Continued from page 14)

It is provided that, first, the interested party should make effort to get authorisation from the right holder on reasonable commercial terms and conditions. If the party fails in this effort, then such authorisation will be considered only on a case-by-case basis on individual merits. When the use is authorised, it will be predominantly for the supply of the domestic market. Besides, the right holder shall be paid adequate remuneration for such use. Finally, any authorisation of use or decision relating to remuneration will be justiceable. There are thus fundamental differences between the provisions on compulsory licencing in the Indian Patent Act and those in Article 31 of the TRIPs Text. The purpose in the Indian Act is to serve public interest; that the Article 31 is basically to protect the interest of the patent holder even while allowing the use without authorisation, of the patent, under exceptional circumstances. Moreover, according to the DFA Text on the TRIPs, patents will have to be granted merely to enable the patentee to enjoy a monopoly for the importation of the patented articles.

The provisions in the TRIPs Text go much beyond the Paris Convention and at the same time imply that all parties accepting the text will be required automatically become a member of the Paris Convention. Article 2(1) of the Text provides that "in respect of Parts II, III and IV of this Agreement, Parties shall comply with Articles 1-12 and 19 of the Paris Convention (1967)". There is an implication here that in all cases where the TRIPs Text is silent, the Paris Convention will take over.

It may be recalled that the case of India acceding to the Paris Convention has been considered by the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs (CCPA) at least twice in the recent past and on each occasion, the CCPA came to the conclusion that it would not be in India's interest to accede. And now we are being asked to accede to the Paris Convention routinely and automatically by virtue of our acceptance of the TRIPs Text!

(To be continued)

Politics of Presidential Election in India

SHIW BALAK PRASAD

After a few months we are going to elect the ninth President of India. In the fifties the question on the lips of a number of political observers and commentators was "who after Nehru?". Likewise now-a-days the same question is raised who after Venkataraman? Insofar as the ruling party at the Centre is concerned, the Congress is at the mercy of other political factions and there are non-Congress governments in many States, and, in addition, there is the threat of terrorism and secessionism.

Due to the parliamentary form of government in India the President is the constitutional head of the state, the real head being the Cabinet.[1] Yet, undoubtedly in a critical political and economic situation, the President of India may play a decisive role. Really and truly, the elite class of the ruling party knows these facts from the very beginning. So after 1967 the selection of candidates for the Presidential election has been made after many deliberations.[2]

Here our main purpose is to analyse the decision-making process by which different Presidents of the Indian Republic have been selected. If we look into the process of the selction from the first President, Dr Rajendra Prasad to Ramaswami Venkataraman, certainly it might be said that the election of the Indian President is formal, but the selction of a candidate for the President is very much important.

We all know that differences had cropped up among the stalwarts of the Congress on the issue of the first President of India itself. There were two great gentlemen for the candidature of the President, Dr. Rajendra Prasad and C. Rajagopalachari. Nehru was much influenced by Rajaji's modern vision and secularism. He thought he would get on better with the statesman from the south. Besides, as the Governor-General of the Indian Dominion, he had much experience and had also the greatest reputation of intelligence and statesmanship.[3] Nevertheless, a lot of facts went in favour of Dr Prasad who was an active participant in the freedom struggle, a steeled Gandhian; in contrast, Rajaji had not taken part in the Quit India movement. Thus, Rajaji had become unpopular, particularly in the north, because he had advocated self-determination for Muslim-majority provinces. On the other hand, Sardar Patel was very eager for Dr Prasad as the President because he did not want to give absolute power to Nehru. Keeping in view the opinion of Patel, Maulana Azad finally worked for Dr Prasad's candidature. Hence, many members resisted the candidature of Rajaji in the Congress Parliamentary Party meeting.[4] At that moment, there was no alternative but to accept Dr Prasad as the first Indian President.[5]

The author is a Reader in the Post-Graduate Department of Political Science, T P. College, Madhopura (Bihar).

After the very first general elections (1952) there appeared a changed political phenomenon regarding the Presidential election—the Congress was divided and a new party Kisan Majdoor Praja Party was formed. Apparently, all opposition parties jointly supported K.T. Shah for Presidential candidature. But a veteran statesman, Dr Rajendra Prasad had earned a fair reputation as an interim President, so his name was unanimously proposed in the joint meeting of the Congress Working Committee and the Congress Parliamentary Party.[6]

The Prime Minister, Nehru, also accepted him as a national personality and stressed that he must be in Rashtrapati Bhavan.[7] Consequently, many Independent members caste their votes in Prasad's favour.[8] Eventually he was elected by getting 61.31 per cent votes.

On the eve of the second Presidential election (1957), several differences between Nehru and Dr Prasad emerged (in choosing) the Presidential candidate by the Congress. Since Dr Rajendra Prasad was an uncompromising Gandhian and an orthodox Hindu, he could not easily give his assent to the Hindu Code Bill.

This was one of the reasons why Nehru wanted to choose Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan as the Union President and for that he publicly advised that old statesmen should abandon their posts.[9] He was more in favour of Radhakrishnan than Rajendra Prasad. Obviously, the Congress Parliamentary

Party was divided over the issue.[10] But Dr Rajendra Prasad wanted to contest for another term and was strongly backed by Maulana Azad. Azad's point of view was that Radhakrishnan did not participate in the freedom movement and had accepted knighthood from the British rulers. So, ultimately, Dr Rajendra Prasad was declared the Congress candidate and re-elected as the President of India by 99.24 per cent votes.

On the occasion of the third Presidential election in 1962, there was no problem for the ruling or opposition parties. When the Congress nominated Radhakrishnan as its candidate, he was unanimously acclaimed, for as the Vice-President and Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, he was always impartial. Therefore, there was no political complication at that time.,

The Presidential election in 1967 was an earnest problem before the Congress. This was due to the fact that many northern States had non-Congress governments and the Congress party was riddled with factionalism. The Congress was clearly divided into two groups—one led by Smt. Gandhi and her supporters and another was the so-called Syndicate members who were veterans and experienced. The Vice-President, Dr Zakir Hussain, represented the minority communities. So Smt. Gandhi wanted to choose him as the Presidential candidate but Kamaraj (then Congress President) was in favour of Dr Radhakrishnan again. Later on, the Congress Parliamentary Party authorised Smt. Gandhi and Kamaraj to choose the party's candidate. In the rapidly changing situation, Smt. Gandhi was very eager that the person nominated by her should be made the President so that he could come to her rescue if she were in a critical position in the future. Sensing the undercurrents within the Congress, Dr Radhakrishnan chose to abdicate, thus making Dr Zakir Hussain the obvious choice for the Congress. Many opposition parties, on the other hand, selected K. Subbarao as their Presidential candidate. Eventually, Dr Hussain was elected by 56.4 per cent votes.

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THE Presidential election of 1969 has much importance in the constitutional history of India in which the official candidate of the Congress was defeated by an Independent candidate. Though the tug-of-war within the Congress had begun after the fourth general elections, it reached its zenith on the eve of the Presidential election. As veteran politicians Kamaraj, Sanjiva Reddy, Y.B. Chavan, Morarji Desai, Atulya Ghose, S.K. Patil, etc. wanted the Presidential candidate to be chosen from amongst them, Smt. Gandhi was very afraid and careful and was backing Jagjivan Ram. Thus this issue finally went to the Congress Working Committee in which Smt. Gandhi was in minority and Neelam Sanjiva Reddy was nominated as the party's candidate. However, Smt. Gandhi suspected that if the official candidate was elected, he might try to dislodge her from power and hence she decided that in the Presidential election every member of the electoral college may be left free to vote according to his or her conscience and not be forced to vote for the official candidate. Although Smt. Gandhi filed the nomination papers of Sanjiva Reddy for the Presidential election, she later refused to issue a party whip in favour of Reddy and threw in her lot with V.V. Giri who was an Independent candidate.

There were 15 candidates in this prestigious poll and among the main contestants Reddy was backed by the Congress Syndicate, V.V. Giri was supported by the Communists, Socialists, DMK and C.D. Deshmukh was supported by the Jana Sangh, the Swantantra Party and the Lok Dal. As a result of cross-voting Giri benefited and was elected. Thus began game of "power-politics" in practice in which there was no room for scruples, parliamentary traditions, party discipline and so on. Thanks to Smt. Gandhi's manoeuvres the Congress was clearly divided into two—Congress (Organisation) and Congress (Ruling) later. Therefore, we can say that V.V. Giri was really an elected President whereas all the former Presidents of India were selected. Initially, Giri was loyal to the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, but later on he started assuming the role of the people's President, so he propagated the view that the President was no figure-head.

On the eve of the fifth Presidential election, the Congress Parliamentary Board chose Fakhruddin Ali Ahmad as their Presidential candidate.[13] It is said that Smt. Gandhi had decided in favour of Ahmad a month before[14] the Presidential elections were to be held. The election was a mere formality.[15] Though there were two more names for the Presidential post at that time—Jagjivan Ram and Swaran Singh, but Ahmad was the favoured one because Smt. Gandhi required an obedient President. Tridev Chaudary was the candidate put up by the Opposition but was tamely defeated by Ahmad. By now it was clear that the President must be obedient to the Prime Minister and not hold any independent views and he should also be the choice of and enjoy the confidence of the Prime Minister.

Neelam Sanjiva Reddy was elected unanimously in 1977. Certainly in the constitutional history of India, he was not opposed by any opposition party. At that time it had become clear that the Janata Party's nominee would ultimately be elected, so the Congress acquiesced. Hence, for the first time, the Presidential election was completed on the basis of common consent of all the political parties. But leaders of the Janata Party had different attitudes on this issue. For instance, the Jana Sangh faction of the Janata Party was very eager for Hidayatulla, Prime Minister Morarji Desai's weakness for Rukmini Devi Arundal, Jai Prakash Narayan's proposal for Achyut Patvardhan, then Home Minister Charan Singh advised the name of Jagjivan Ram and so on. Ultimately, the then General Secretary of the Janata Party, Madhu Limaye, authentically announced the name of Neelam Sanjiva Reddy on the basis of common consent.[10] There was no contestant, so, Reddy was unanimously elected.

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GIANI Zail Singh became the seventh President of India in 1982. He was also the choice of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and he complied with Smt Gandhi's wishes. It was said that Zail Singh owed his rise in politics to Smt. Gandhi and Sanjay Gandhi. At that time, Smt. Gandhi perhaps thought that his elevation to the office of the President would help her in tackling the deteriorating problem in Punjab. To repay his gratitude, Zail Singh made Rajiv Gandhi the Prime Minister soon after the assassination of Smt. Gandhi. To be precise, Zail Singh was not really an elected President, but chosen by the then Prime Minister. Though Hansraj Khanna was also in the race for Presidential election at that time, supported by ten opposition parties, he was defeated. Likewise, R. Venkataraman was also the choice of our then Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi. Although V.R. Krishna Iyer was also a candidate, supported by some opposition parties, he was defeated by R. Venkataraman as the Congress-I nominee in 1987.

Thus we see that there is a decisive role of the Prime Minister in the Presidential election. It is another thing that Dr Rajendra Prasad was made the President continuously for three terms despite Nehru's reservations. But after him the successive Prime Ministers persisted in holding Presidential elections. Although our Constitution provides that the President has no affiliation with any political party, yet the President's office cannot escape being politicised. Consequently, a non-political man cannot aspire to be the President of India. Hence it is not a question of who will be the President after Venkataraman, instead, the main question is that who will dare to solve the burning problems of the country. We, the Indians, are politically motivated and fail to judge rationally and act impartially. The dilemma of choosing the right man to be the President of India is a difficult task not only for the ruling Congress or Opposition but the nation as a whole. Therefore, it should be solved by common consent in the interest of the nation. ■

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ARUNACHALAM: Technology & Human Values

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small spaceship in limitless space, and only through care and understanding is it possible for us to co-exist and prosper. Technology has globalised every part of this earth, and we must be grateful for it. But technology has been a mixed blessing as well. Environmental and ecological damages have grown as also the development of weapons of mass destruction. It is, therefore, necessary to interpret technology in terms of human spirit and thinking. This link is not going to be easy as there are no well-defined laws or equations as in engineering that can quantify human values, which are so easy to comprehend, but difficult to define quantitatively. Therefore, scientific temper must be modulated and indeed become subservient to human virtues. This is going to be the challenge for the coming decades for all of us, and specially for you entering the real world after your graduation today. Let noble thoughts accompany you wherever you go, and in whatever profession you chose to enter in. ■

Punjab after Elections: Some Basic Issues

— M.S. DHAMI

The 1992 Punjab election may be characterised as a deviant election. The two preceding elections in Punjab, of 1985 and 1989, witnessed a significant change in the party support-base in favour of the Akali political formations. The Congress party in the State was relegated to the second position. And these elections may be labelled as critical elections.

As a matter of fact, the electoral support-base of the Congress party amongst the Punjab Sikh peasantry—which is predominantly Jat Sikh—has been declining ever since the late 1960s. The Sikh peasantry constitutes around 40 per cent of the total population of the State, and a bulk of this important social group now support the Akali parties. And any State Government that does not adequately represent this section of the Punjab population is unlikely to stay in power for any length of time.

Before taking up the electoral support-bases of major political formations, we provide a brief overview of the Punjab social structure in terms of community and major caste groups.

According to the 1981 census, the Sikhs are around 61 per cent, the Hindus 37 per cent, and the Muslims, Christians and others together are barely two per cent. The two major communities also differ in terms of rural-urban spread. The Sikhs are predominantly rural, 85 per cent of their total population live in rural areas and barely 15 per cent in the urban areas; the corresponding figures for the Hindus—who dominate in urban areas—are 52 and 48 per cent. Further, peasantry and artisan caste groups predominate amongst the Sikhs, while upper caste mercantile castes group is predominantly Hindus. A large majority of the Scheduled Castes, who are statistically Hindus and Sikhs (in case one follows census figures literally), as a matter of fact form a distinct group lying in the twilight zone between the Hindu and the Sikh communities. For our purposes we divide the combined Hindu and Sikh population into three groups, alongwith their proportion in the total population as under:

Non-Scheduled Caste Hindus	Non-Scheduled Caste Sikhs	Scheduled Castes
%	%	%
22	49	27

So, given the nature of the Punjab social structure, a purely secessionist demand would lack democratic mandate.

In order to study the changes in the electoral support-base of the major political parties in the State, we shall try to club these into three political groupings in terms of the similarity of the support-base and ideological affinity of the constituents of each political group. The first group comprises the Congress party and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP); the second includes various factions of the Akali Dal and All India Sikh Students Federation; and the third group—which is referred to as the *buffer political group*—includes the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), the Republican Party of India (RPI), the Communist Party of India (CPI), the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPM), the Janata Dal, its splinter groups, and incipient groups like the Punjab Bachao Morcha. The electoral support in terms of percentage of votes polled in the last three elections (1980, 1985 and 1989) of the three political groupings is as under:

Year	*Political groupings** I Congress Party & BJP % vote	II Akali Dal and its factions % vote	III Buffer Political group % vote
1980 (Assembly elections)	52	27	15
1985 (Assembly elections)	43	38	12
1989 (Lok Sabha elections)	31	44	20

**It excludes the votes polled by the Independent candidates*

The votes polled by the three main political groups over the period 1980-89 show a steep fall in the votes polled by the Congress and the BJP. This is mainly due to the decline in the support of the Congress party

The author was formerly on the faculty of Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar. This paper was presented by him in a Seminar on 'Developments in Punjab after the 1992 Election' in the Panjab University Campus on March 5, 1992, organised by the Institute of Social Sciences.

amongst the Sikhs in general, particularly the Sikh peasantry, and the Scheduled Castes. The 1989 election (as also the 1992 election) shows the emergence of the BSP which enjoys a sizeable support of the Scheduled Castes.

Despite a decline in the electoral support of the two Communist Parties, the third buffer political group as a whole has improved its vote percentage from around 15 per cent to 20 per cent in this period. In view of its equidistance from the other two groups, it can play a healthy mediating role in the politics of the State.

From Coalition Politics to Anandpur Sahib Resolution

Rapid changes in the socio-economic structure since the Green Revolution in mid-1960s, growth of unplanned urbanisation, commercial penetration, and the inroad of Western life-styles and cultural values through urban-based middle classes provided a fertile ground for the rise of tradition-oriented religio-political movement.

Centralisation of power under the hegemony of the Congress regime and the limited power with the State Governments contributed in no small way to the emergence of militancy even amongst the moderate Akalis. In the reorganised Punjab, Akali Dal for the first time formed the government in the State in 1967 with the Jana Sangh as the coalition partner. Various Akali-Jana Sangh coalition governments were formed in the period 1967-1971.

However, the Akalis' experience of governance at the State level was not happy. In addition to the limited power vested with the State Government, they were humiliated by the Congress High Command under the smokescreen of Congress "secularism". Here is one instance which highlights this point. In July 1970 the Akali Government under Parkash Singh Badal was reduced to minority in the State legislature due to the withdrawal of support by the Jana Sangh, its coalition partner, on the issue of affiliation of colleges of four Punjab districts to Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar. In order to get support of the Congress legislators, Badal approached the Congress High Command. The Congress party laid down ten-point conditions[1] for supoort to the Akali Government. Most important of these were: (i) land reforms, (ii) secularism, (iii) place of Hindi in its language policy, and (iv) option to colleges to affiliate either to Guru Nanak Dev University or Panjab University. The second and third conditions favoured one community—the all-India majority ethnic group—and were clearly sectarian. All this was done to promote the so-called "secularism", and the Akalis ostensibly were asked to observe secularism. This illustration shows how Akalis were humiliated by the secularist whip of the hegemonic Congress party during the heydey of moderation amongst the Akalis.

Another political factor that contributed to the Akalis' alienation was the nature of representation from Punjab to the Central Council of Ministers. There is a widespread feeling amongst the Akalis that Punjab's representatives in the Union Council of Ministers do not represent Punjab's interests what to talk of the Sikh interests. Ever since the retirement of Swaran Singh in the 1970s, the representation of Punjab has not been significant. In the mid-1980s, the two Punjabis—Buta Singh and Balram Jakhar—who were in the Union Ministry, were elected from Rajasthan. These developments, incidentally, coincided with the decline in the Congress support-base amongst important segments of the Punjabi society, coupled with Centralised tendencies at the national level. The legal-bureaucratic framework of the State, manned by upper caste urban middle classes, had little empathy with the rural masses. The Akali Dal, on the one hand, was consolidating the support of the emerging rural-based middle class by espousing the economic demands of the farming community, and, on the other hand, it was being pressurised by its inbuilt ideology—nurtured by the Akalis' cultural elites,[2] representing marginal urban-based social forces and rural priestly classes—in favour of intra-community cohesion (Panthic unity).

As the Akali leaders found that they had virtually no influence in the power structure at the national level, and whatever limited power they had, at times, at the State level is shaky, they naturally would have a lesser stake in the Indian political set-up. Under the circumstances, the Akalis would naturally ask for a fundamental restructuring of the Indian federal set-up with greater autonomy for the States. From 1967 to the late 1970s, peasant-based Akali leaders followed a pragmatic and moderate stance in the matter of State autonomy demand. However, in view of the inbuilt ideology of the Akali Dal, and centripetal tilt in the federal balance, the influence of tradition-oriented cultural elites on Akali politics manifested itself in October 1973 when the Akali Dal Working Committee adopted a 'draft of the new policy programme of Shiromani Akali Dal' with religious overtures to the State autonomy demand, popularly known as the Anandpur Sahib Resolution.[3] The Resolution on autonomy was not taken seriously by the Akali Dal till the *Dharam Yudh Morcha* (agitation) in August 1982 when it became a live issue.

Rise of Ethnic Militancy

The rise of Sikh militancy is the result of rapid changes in Punjab's social structure, historically-conditioned communal stereotypes nurtured amongst the two major communities under the hegemony of their respective middle classes, and the weakening of political institutions (including political parties) since the mid-1960s.

The immediate issue that triggered religio-political mobilisation and Sikh militancy can be traced to the tragic armed clash between the orthodox Sikhs and a heretical Nirankari sect in April 1978. The fall out of this clash created a serious law and order problem for the then Akali-led coalition State Government under Parkash Singh Badal. Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, head of an important Sikh seminary, Damdami Taksal, warned the Nirankaris that his followers would not allow the holding of the Nirankari *satsangh* (congregation) in Punjab. His call was more than reciprocated by orthodox urban Sikh middle classes and tradition-oriented rural Sikhs. It is reported that the Punjab Government under Parkash Singh Badal at one time decided to arrest Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. And the decision was withdrawn on the assurance on behalf of Bhindranwale that he will confine his activities only to the religious domain.

Commenting on this episode one Sikh ideologue, representing a viewpoint of a vocal section of the Sikh middle class, lamented: "The man (Jarnail S. Bhindranwale) who was expected to successfully lead the community made a somersault by announcing that his *jatha* (disciplined group) was to confine itself to the propagation of religion only".[1] This stray comment and other inferential evidence relating to succession of events leading to the tragic event of the storming of the Golden Temple by the Indian army in June 1984, and the colossal human tragedy after the assassination of the Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi, in November 1984, show that movements of this dimension are not the handiwork of one man alone, they are propelled by the backing of significant social forces, alongwith appropriate situational factors or objective conditions.

It is my contention that the Sikh militant movement of the early 1980s and its escalation since mid-1980s has involved diverse social groups in the Sikh society, moved by different motives depending on the social situation of these groups. For instance, the Sikh urban middle class, living as the minority segment in the Hindu-dominated urban locale—where there is competitive communalism in matters of employment, trading opportunities and education—suffers from cultural insecurity. The Bhindranwale movement for Panthic unity provided to this segment and other marginal groups a sense of belonging in a larger Sikh community brotherhood. Here is one comment of an urban middle class professional, belonging to a marginal social group about the movement launched under the patronage of Damdami Taksal's head:

> We felt very happy when we saw people with full *Khalsa* 'rehat' (a Sikh practice relating to Khalsa symbols). This gave us immense pleasure. We immensely liked their *Amrit-Prachar* (Sikh baptism).[5]

The Sikh peasantry is a dominant group in the Punjab countryside and shows little interest in cultural identity. They take Sikh identity for granted. Even in normal times, the peasantry is generally oppressed and exploited by the State machinery, especially by the police and revenue authorities. In view of the religio-political mobilisation in recent years and reaction against the inroad of perverted modernising influences—in the form of grow-rich-quick, middle class consumerist-culture,[6]—religious tradition is reasserting itself. The socio-religious network has been activised even in the rural areas. In the confrontation between the State and the militant movement, naked oppression on the peasantry has multiplied. The rapid socio-economic changes have led not only to economic hardship but to considerable social dislocation as well. It is this objective situation which has roped in the peasantry and the rural masses in general in the Sikh militant movement.

The Scheduled Castes and the marginal social groups, for example, the smaller caste groups, the 'servicing and artisan' castes, being without power have little stake in the socio-political set-up. A small section of these groups too is actively involved in militant activities. Deeper religious identification provides to them recompense for powerlessness and their low position in the hierarchic social structure.

This brief account of the ramifications of the militant movement in diverse strata of the Sikh society suggests that the movement enjoys a sizeable potential support within the Sikh society, it needs to be tackled boldly with an open mind—piecemeal measures won't do.

In order to retrieve the present tragic situation there is need for certain immediate corrective measures on the part of the State apparatus; and an all round effort by independent public figures and civil rights bodies for the involvement of militant leadership and cadre in the open democratic process, alongwith a fundamental restructuring of an over-centralised federal set-up in the country. Here is a list of corrective measures:

In order to restore its minimal credibility and a certain degree of legitimacy amongst the Punjabi people, the State must do away with certain illegal practices with immediate effect. There should be strict instructions for total end to fake encounters and torture of militant cadre. Rather they should enforce humane conditions for all detenus, preferably on a par with political detenus. For instance, men like Prof. Rajinderpal Singh Bulara should have been given Class A status in prison. The Punjab police in this case, as in so many others, resorted to inhuman torture that resulted in a tragedy.[7]

Another reprehensible practice adopted by the law enforcing authorities is that of prizes to policemen for killing the listed category of militants. This has not only bred corrupt practices in the police force, it has also converted it into a mercenary force. The sooner this degrading practice is ended the better it would for restoring some credibility to the law-enforcing force.

Condign punishment to those indicted in the November 1984 pogrom against the Sikhs in Delhi. The Congress party, for its own sake, should suspend all the party members indicted by civil rights bodies in the November 1984 tragedy.

Secondly, there is pressing need for creating suitable conditions so that militant leaders and cadres are encouraged to participate in an open democratic process. Despite difficulties at the moment, a beginning can be made by the intervention of independent public spirited figures, non-governmental bodies such as the People's Union of Civil Liberties, People's Union of Democratic Rights, and 'concerned groups', say, social scientists and social activists. A helping hand can be provided by those political parties and party leaders who still command the respect of the militants and the Akalis. This may include a select group of leaders from the Akali Dals, the Janata Dal, its splinter groups and parties, independent Leftists and leaders of Dalit and other sympathetic political groups. This buffer group of parties, concerned citizens, and public figures can play a crucial role in bringing the militants into an open democratic struggle by playing a mediating role between the government and the Akali militant groups.

In addition to resolving the political issues with the Akalis and the militants, the government may permit an open democratic movement to the militants and the Akalis to carry their "reform programme" through open peaceful means in place of crude, self-defeating hit-and-run method of enforcing "reforms". In case the reform movement is properly directed it may prove beneficial to the rural people.

It is important to state here that an open democratic struggle on the part of the militants and the Akalis opens a vista of a better future for the battered Punjabis. The very progress of dialogue on the part of the Sikh militant groups with dissident viewpoint amongst the Sikhs, the Akalis and the Punjabis in general—including the Punjabi Scheduled Castes, rural and urban Hindus—will widen their limited horizon. This will pave the way for genuine choice in place of decisions registered through captive audiences. The democratic struggle means honest dialogue with freedom from fear on the part of all concerned parties. Buffer political forces should try to ensure end to manipulation, legal subterfuges and force by the State apparatus. In the process the exclusivist Sikh nationality movement may acquire a broad-based and humane face—not very different from the urge of the Punjabi people for an identity and this may well find a niche in a decentralised federal India, maybe with some sort of autonomous status for the Punjab State.

Lastly, alongwith the leavening of the democratic process, there is an urgent need for appointing an independent federal commission to deal exhaustively with all the aspects of autonomy for the Indian States in general and a special status for Punjab which is maximally acceptable to the important segments of the Punjabi people. The commission should be *independent* in the true sense of the term. It would naturally include representatives of the Government of India, an equal contigent of independent public figures that enjoys the goodwill of the Akalis and militants in addition to that of Punjabis in general; the third segment may be those who represent the particular interests of various concerned parties. The balancing weight be assigned to the "independent public figures".

In case the government or any other group tries to manipulate the impartiality of the commission, it would lose credibility, and the militants and the Akalis may clamour for an International Commission. This would lead to a catastrophic deadlock. With requisite statesmanship on the part of the concerned parties, the problem need not be insoluble. ■

References

1. AICC Report of the General Secretaries, June 1970-September 1971, All India Congress Committee, New Delhi, 1971, pp. 21-23.
2. This group included tradition-oriented intelligentsia working as editors of Sikh periodicals; Akali Dal and All India Sikh Student Federation ideologues and a section of University dons and other literate groups reinterpreting Sikh theology and religio-political ideology in modern times.
3. It is generally believed that the Anandpur Sahib Resolution was originally drafted by a cultural elite who was suspended by the mainstream Akali Dal in 1970 for his extreme views on Sikh Homeland.
4. Gur Rattan Pal Singh, *The Illustrated History of the Sikhs (1947-78)*, published by the author, Chandigarh, 1979, p. 336.
5. Informal interview at Amritsar on March 5, 1986.
6. It seems cultural degeneration in the social system has also affected those who claim to be part of the militant movement.
7. Professor Bulara was tortured to death by the police due to his active part in militant activities.
8. Divested of its over-zealous hit-and-run mode of conducting the reform programme, it can be channelised into more fruitful channels on the pattern of M.K. Gandhi's constructive programme.

Burbulis' Visit to India

JAYASHEKAR

India and the former Soviet Union enjoyed a high degree of stable, close and friendly relations until very recently. However, in the last days of Gorbachev's period, the relationship between the two countries somewhat declined and was faced with several difficult problems largely due to political instability and economic chaos in the former Soviet Union and political uncertainities in India.

After the abortive coup in August 1991 the relations between India and the former Soviet Union took a sharp turn for the worse. They became virtually immobilised. Several factors contributed to this immobility. Soon after the coup, the Russian Government quickly established its control over the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs and subsquently took it over completely. Once the control was established, the Western-oriented new policy-makers in the Ministry gave a decisive thrust to the Russian foreign policy towards the West completely ignoring the former friends and allies in the Third World. The new foreign policy-makers in the Russian Government were immature, inexperienced and had a very narrow perception of international relations. They lacked knowledge of the world in which they lived. For instance, they did not know the nature and extent of the Indo-Soviet relations and their significance to Russia. Their approach to foreign policy was based on the limited understanding of national interest. India was viewed as one of the innumerable Third World countries living on Soviet doles. They believed that relations with such a country is only burdensome. Therefore, it deserves to be neglected.

At the same time, Indian policy-making also showed its own weaknesses in dealing with the turbulent changes in the former Soviet Union. The Indian policy-makers were unable to understand the fast changes in that country. With the result, they became excessively cautious. Given the wide-ranging relations and lack of political guidance, bureaucrats in the South Block feared that any mistake made can prove to be very costly and refused to be innovative in their approach to the changing situation in the former Soviet Union. In the absence of new initiatives, the bureaucracy clung to the tradition of putting all faith in a single leader, Gorbachev. Till the end the Indian policy-makers believed that somehow Gorbachev would miraculously regain his power or the old order would be restored. Therefore, when Gorbachev was overthrown they were shocked. It took some time for the Indian policy-makers to recover from this shock and accept the realities.

The author is Professor, Centre for Soviet and East European Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

The Indian policy-makers were also deeply prejudiced against Yeltsin; much of this prejudice was gained through the Western media. They were so prejudiced as to show their inclination towards conservative leaders in the coup of August 1991. Because of such prejudices they were slow and reluctant in dealing with Yeltsin's leadership. When Yeltsin offered to sign a treaty with India during the Foreign Minister Madhavsinh Solanki's visit to Moscow, it was quietly rejected much to the chagrin of the Yeltsin Government. The attitude of the Indian policy-makers was no doubt annoying to the Yeltsin leadership. Fortunately, by January 1992, the political leaders in Russia and India realised the high stakes—in the political, economic, military and strategic spheres—involved in their relationship. This made them agree to reconstruct their relations taking into account the new realities in the two countries and in the world situation.

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VIEWED in this backdrop, Burbulis' visit to India in the first week of May is the most significant and positive development in the process of restructuring of India's relations with Russia, the succesor state to the former Soviet Union. Both Russia and India have attached considerable importance to Burbulis' visit. This was well reflected in the composition of the Russian delegation and the task assigned to it. The delegation consisted of several important Russian Ministers and officials such as P.O. Aven, Minister for Foreign Economic Relations, A.A. Natchaev, Minister for Economy, V.M. Loppukhine, Minister for Fuel and Energy and M.D. Malei, State Counsellor for Conversion of Defence Industry. It was led by Gennady E. Burbulis, Secretary to the Russian Government and second most important man in Yeltsin's organisation. It was the first high-level delegation from Russia to visit India after the coup of August 1991.

The main purpose of the visit of Burbulis' delegation was to give concrete shape to an agreement between the Russian President, Boris Yeltsin, and the Indian Prime Minister, P.V. Narasimha Rao, when they met at New York during the UN Summit at the end of January. The two leaders had agreed in principle to promote a high-level relationship between their countries. Specifically, Burbulis' delegation was assigned the task of providing an institutional framework for promoting trade and economic cooperation between Russia and India and giving assurances to India on continued supplies of military goods and transfer of technology, sort out some accumulated problems in the sphere of trade and aid, resolve the difficult problem of rupee-rouble exchange rate, indicate the Russian commitment to a number of agreements entered into by India with the former Soviet Union and to establish an institutional mechanism to solve problems that still remain or which may appear in future. Above all, Burbulis came to India to assure the Indian leaders that Russia attaches considerable importance to its relations with India though on the basis of "inspired pragmatism" and "new realities".

Burbulis' visit took place in the shadow of controversy concerning transfer of cryogenic engines to India for its space programme. On the eve of the visit, the United States mounted pressure on Russia to cancel the contract to transfer rockets and threatened to impose penalties on the trading organisations like the ISRO in India and Govkosmos in Russia. Burbulis spent a considerable part of his time during the visit to assure the Indian leaders and public that Russia would honour its commitment to transfer technology under the contract. However, Burbulis surprised his Indian counterparts by declaring that Russia would honour its commitments on transfer of rocket technology on the basis of neutral international expert opinion. Bringing in a third party into the picture was not the liking of India.

In spite of the firm declaration by Burbulis on supply of cryogenic engines, the Indian policy-makers were left with some nagging doubts about Russia's ability to honour its commitments under the US pressures. Russia is too dependent on the US for economic aid to overcome its economic difficulties. Its government is divided on the question of technology transfer against the wishes of the US. The dominant group in the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs is too eager to seek strategic partnership with the United States at any price. Under these circumstances, how far Russia will assert its independence and defy American pressures to meet its commitment to India is difficult to say.

India, at the same time, realises the Russian compulsions to honour its commitments. If Russia fails to honour its contractual obligations under the US pressure, it would become an unreliable supplier of technology and sophisticated military goods in the international market. The stakes involved are not $250 million contract with India but also a multi-billion market for Russian technology and weapons. The fear of losing a large market may force Russia to come to some arrangement with the US or assert its independence in selling technology. Ultimately, how Russia will resolve the dilemma it is faced with is difficult to predict. Meanwhile, there is likely to be a delay in the supply of cryogenic engines to India.

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BURBULIS' visit was important in several other ways also. This was the first time a powerful political delegation visited New Delhi from Moscow. It provided a good opportunity for India to assess the shift in the Russian foreign policy. The discussions showed that even in the changed environment Russia is keen to have high-level relations with India. India and Russia continue to have similarity of views on many international issues. They have certain shared strategic perceptions, especially in regard to South Asia, South-East Asia and Central Asia. The two countries' economic interests also coincide. Therefore, the two have considerable space in which they can work together. However, the Indian officials were not able to get a clear idea from Burbulis' delegation as to where Russia places India in its foreign policy priorities.

From the politico-strategic point of view, the important outcome of the visit was the Russian reiteration of its commitment on the Kashmir issue. More important was Burbulis' reaffirmation on continued military supplies to sustain the combat-readiness of India's armed forces. At the press conference on May 5, Burbulis declared that "we are going to develop cooperation to exclude any pause that may affect Indian armed forces". Russia showed its readiness to offer credits for purchase of military goods. But, there was no indication on whether it is willing to sell these goods at concessional prices or that credits offered are at concessional rates of interest. These are issues to be negotiated later.

During the visit, Burbulis signed a five year agreement on trade and economic cooperation. It accorded the most-favoured nation treatment to India and Russia. It provided for change and continuity in trade. The agreement stipulated that all payments and settlements shall be effected in freely convertible currencies "unless otherwise specified by any inter-governmental agreements". Thus it establishes a dual trading system between India and Russia; one on the basis of convertible currency and the other on rupee-payment.

The five year agreement on trade and economic cooperation assumes some significance in the context of total collapse of trade between India and Russia in the first quarter of 1992. The two countries also agreed to forge cooperation in science and technology. In a separate agreement they agreed to set up a group to monitor cooperation in the field of power. However, the Russian side has not indicated whether they would provide credits for power and energy industries. Therefore, until credit is made available by Russia cooperation in power sector is unlikely to take off.

An important outcome of Burbulis' visit was the agreement to establish joint commission on trade, economic and technological cooperation. In the past, India and the Soviet Union had set up 18 working groups to monitor and sort out problems in various fields of cooperation. The collapse of such institutional mechanism was mainly responsible for persistence of difficult problems in the relationship of India and Russia. Therefore, the new agreement to set up a joint commission alongwith the agreement on trade, officials believe, would help the two countries to quickly solve all problems amicably as and when they arise and smoothen the process of cooperation.

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THE visit of Burbulis delegation was no doubt an important step in the direction of promoting closer relations between India and Russia, but it was only a first step. The two countries cannot rest assured that their interaction will now become smooth. For, the visit has not removed all anxieties and uncertainties in Indo-Russian relations. There are still many hurdles and problems which, if they are allowed to continue, may adversely influence the development of the relations. The Russian attitude towards American pressure on India to sign the NPT is unclear. The problem of rupee-rouble exchange rate remains unresolved. Supply of military and civilian goods from Russia is faced with uncertainty in spite of assurances. The legal and institutional framework for promoting relations between India and Russia is still to be evolved.

Therefore, the two countries will have to make a concerted effort to realise the goal of elevating their relations to higher levels. Such efforts require change in attitudes towards each other and mutual trust. It also requires that the two countries clearly enunciate policies towards each other. It is necessary for Russia to define its India policy in clearer terms indicating where it places India in its foreign policy priorities. This is imperative in view of the quick changes in Russian policies under domestic and external pressures. This will help India's responses. No useful purpose would be served by merely signing agreements unless they are supported by concrete actions. Russia has to devise methods to ensure supplies by making its military and civilian enterprises to behave in accordance with the agreements it signs. This may not be easy to achieve in the present Russian situation where the government control over enterprises are weakening. But without such a step, Indo-Russian trade and economic cooperation cannot grow.

Russia must also try to protect Indo-Russian relations from external influences. This it can do only by asserting its national interests. Switching over to convertible currency trade under the new agreement may bring down Indo-Russian trade during the period of adjustment. Therefore, it is necessary for the two countries to protect the core of their trade relations through counter-trade and prolonging rupee payment arrangement.

Even when all these things are done, Indo-Russian relations will still be faced with certain uncertainties arising from the fast changes in Russia. In Russia, this is a period of transition. During this period there is bound to be abrupt political changes and economic dislocations. Their impact will be felt by Indo-Russian relations. The impact can be minimised by frequent exchanges at high political levels and evolving appropriate institutions. These would require time. In the meantime, the interaction between India and Russia may proceed in a jerky fashion. ■

Foreign Policy Changes

Critics Unfair to the Government

P.S. JAYARAMU

A discussion on our foreign policy u as initiated in Mainstream *on July 6, 1991 and it was enriched by contributions from Partha Ghosh, R.C. Dutt, Anil Rajimwale and Ajay K. Mehra. Here are two more contributions.* — Editor

The year 1991 was truly historic, worthy of being remembered for the most undreamt of changes around us. The passing of the Cold War into the pages of history, the disintegration of the once mighty Soviet Union and the emergence of the United States as the dominant power if not as heralding the dawn of the unipolar world are too important developments to be taken lightly. As far as India is concerned, the developments were, as Prime Minister Narasimha Rao said in the Lok Sabha, mind-boggling necessitating a thorough review of the way the country was carrying out its foreign policy. What follows is a review of the changes effected by the government and the reactions of the critics to them.

To take up first the question of the official Indian responses to the changes in the former Soviet Union and the management of India's national interests in the new set-up, that is, the Commonwealth of Independent States, we need to be truly objective. Though the government had in a way mishandled the situation specially in the wake of the failed coup in August 1991, it was quick to overcome its diplomatic mistakes by fine-tuning its policy to the new power (and personality) realities in the former Soviet Union. That the government was able to get over the so-called sentimentality vis-a-vis its relations with the Central authority and Gorbachev is seen by its realisation of the need for not only recognising Boris Yelstin, but also the New Commonwealth. Earlier to that, the leadership also took the right step of recognising the Baltic States which declared themselves independent. Yeltsin was officially invited to visit India which might in all probability take place during the later part of this year. The government also took the right step of upgrading our diplomatic offices in the Baltic republics and the former republics of Ukraine and Kazakhstan. And during the visit of our Foreign Secretary, J.N. Dikshit, to Moscow the two countries are reported to have finalised the draft of a new political treaty incorporating their willingness to retain certain elements of the erstwhile Indo-Soviet Treaty and more importantly the need for recognising the new power realities.

The author is a Reader in Political Science, University of Bangalore.

The Memoranda of Understanding on Trade and Supplies of Defence and Power generation equipment has allowed for flexibility to meet the changes in the two countries' economies. Though issues like the continuity or otherwise of the rupee-rouble trade do not seem to have been resolved, the visit and the Memoranda of Understanding signifies that at the official level, efforts are being made to work out arrangements which would be to the advantage of both the parties. The prevailing and the foreseeable economic situation in Russia might well mean a certain amount of uncertainty and a possible disadvantage to India compared to the earlier years. But even the worst critics cannot deny that the government is alive to the new realities and is trying to salvage the situation to the extent possible. Simply put, the government cannot be accused of inaction as some of the analysts have been arguing. It is, however, imperative that the government maintains a steady dialogue with its Russian counterpart, as Russia and the other members of the Commonwealth are likely to be bogged down by the sheer weight of their domestic problems and quite understandably look to the

United States and Europe to help them tide over their problems.

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TWO other important issues for which the government has come in for unfair criticism concern its voting with the rest of the Security Council members of the United Nations on the question of terrorism by Libya and the cancellation of the resolution of Zionism.

On the Libyan issue it needs to be noted that the government was swayed not by the Western powers, but largely by considerations of its national interest. The Libyan leadership had caused great harm to India by including Kashmir alongwith the many unresolved issues in its resolution before the U N Council. Though the Libyan authorities were quick to admit their mistake and withdrew Kashmir from the resolution, the Narasimha Rao Government wanted to see the issue in the larger perspective of India's long-standing opposition to terrorism. Also, even an abstention by India during the voting in the UN Security Council would have conveyed wrong signals not only within the country but outside regarding the enormous damage caused by terrorism in Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir. Inaction by India would have weakened India's pleas to the international community, specially the United States and Britain, to denounce Pakistan for its brazen support to terrorism in India. Reportedly, Prime Minister Rao consulted several retired Foreign Secretaries like S.K.Singh and Muchkund Dubey and the former Minister of State for External Affairs, K. Natwar Singh, and all of them endorsed the consensus reached by the government on the issue.

Likewise, on the question of our voting for the cancellation of the age-old resolution on Zionism, the government has been unfairly criticised as yielding to the pressures of the US Government. As Prime Minister Narasimha Rao said, India wanted to see the entire issue in the context of the new realities in the Middle East, specially the ongoing face-to face talks between the Palestinians and the Israelis. Even the moderates among the Palestinians have stopped referring to Israel as a Zionist state and are imbued by a strong sense of realism in their attitudes and the negotiations with the Israelis over the question of finding a lasting solution to the Palestinian problem. A negative vote, or even an abstention by India over the Zionism issue, would have conveyed wrong signals in Western capitals that Indian foreign policy in the post-Cold War era was still characterised by immobilism and time-worn prejudices.

To see the Indian voting as yielding to the pressures of the United States is to misread (and even insult) the capacity of the government to adjust its policies to the fast changing international and regional environment. If the critics, be they in the press or in the Opposition parties, have any serious consideration for India's national interests they should help in the evolution of a bi-partisan foreign policy on the need for re-examining our relations with Israel without diluting our commitment to the cause of an independent Palestine. India should be able to upgrade its relationship with Israel to the level of ambassadorial relations, sooner than later. Even Yasser Arafat is on record having said (during his last visit to India) that an upgradation of India's ties with Israel will not harm the Palestinian cause. Interestingly, his pleas for Indian participation in the West Asia Peace process is, whether we like it or not, linked to how India shapes its policy towards Israel, and more so whether Israel would have no objections to India's being included in the peace process. Needless to say, the two are closely linked to one another.

India has vital stakes in West Asia geostrategically and, as the American Senator Pressler recently warned, there is a real danger of nuclear weapons strewn across the various republics of the former Soviet Union finding their way into this troublesome region. In a situation like the one feared, it may be in India's interest to take Israel seriously, even to take care of our security interests. The challenge lies in how the Indian leaders would accomplish this task without hurting the feelings of the Arab states.

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AS regards our growing relations with the United States, and the attitude of the critics towards it, we need to be clear in our minds that we need not oppose the United States simply for the sake of opposition. The post-Cold War and the post-Soviet Union developments have led to a definite change in the American attitude and policy towards India. They are no longer looking at India as they did during the four decades of Cold War. Pakistan has clearly outlived its strategic utility to the United States. The recent American statement that

Pakistan has nuclear weapons at its disposal suggests to the possible deterioration of the US-Pakistan relations. Our leadership should be able to introduce a strong politico-strategic context to Indo-US relations with the objective of not only strengthening the bilateral relations but also more specifically of using the American connection against any possible security threats from Pakistan. That the government of P.V.Narasimha Rao is clearly heading in such a direction is evident from the high-level negotiations going on beween our Defence Ministry officials and the US officials in this regard.

During the Cold War era our leaders used the Soviet connection to buttress our security vis-a-vis Pakistan. Now in the post-Cold War era coupled with the collapse of the Soviet Union, if they are using (and strenghtening) the American connection vis-a-vis security challenges from Pakistan, we should be appreciative of their efforts, instead of indulging in debates about the demise of non-alignment and so forth.

In sum, it seems clear that while the government is making the right attempts to bring about the necessary reorientations and adjustments in foreign policy in the post-Cold War era, the academic community and the media, with some notable exceptions, have still remained prisoners of the old mind-set and are thus unfairly critical of the government. Let us hope they too will realise the need for change and mould public opinion in the right direction. ■

India's Foreign Policy

Responding to Global Changes

SUMIT CHAKRAVARTTY

The remarkable transformation of the global scenario since the second half of 1989 is so obvious that it does not require any elaboration. Actually it was the 'new thinking' of the erstwhile Soviet President, Mikhail Gorbachev, which was instrumental in effecting the changes that resulted in the collapse of the East European regimes patterned after the Stalinist legacy of the former USSR before the breathtaking disintegration of the Soviet Union itself. However, these visible signposts of fundamental changes in international relations characterising the complete removal from the world affairs of one pole of the bibolar global structure of yesteryears must not make us blind to the basic reality of the present-day world: the end of the Cold War which had threatened mankind with nuclear annihilation only a decade ago.

If one dispassionately analyses the world situation today one would reach the definite conclusion that with the end of the Cold War the overall global environment has improved in terms of reinforcing peace and security across the planet. However, what is complicating matters is the subjective view of the Western superpower, the US, that the end of the Cold War signifies its victory in that exercise. It is doubtless emboldened by the disintegration of the USSR alongside the collapse of statist socialism in Eastern Europe as well as the former Soviet Union. Hence its feverish shortsighted approach of imposing its dictat everywhere by pressuring all states and in particular the weak and vulnerable developing countries of the Third World. This attitude, born out of political myopia which nurtures Washington's belief that it is the real power in today's "unipolar" world, gives rise to the impression in the Third World that the phenomenal changes in today's global scenario are to the detriment of the interests of the developing nations in general.

One of the greatest visionaries of the twentieth century, Mikhail Gorbachev, referred to this shortsightedness in the course of his famous speech at Westminster College, Fulton, Missouri on May 6, 1992. If Sir Winston Churchill's speech at the same spot 46 years ago constituted the launching of the Cold War, Gorbachev's address was an endeavour to analyse the charateristics of the brave new world unveiled as a result of the demise of the Cold War. He said: "In pushing forward to a new civilisation, we should under no circumstances again make the intellectual and consequently the political error of interpreting victory in the Cold War narrowly as a victory for oneself, one's own way of life, one's own values and merits." He underscored that the current changes signify the "incipient substitution of one paradigm of civilisation by another", and concluded that "this existing and intensifying integration of the world opens up a broad spectrum of favourable opportunities for the future of mankind".

Many critics of India's foreign policy are of the considered opinion that the country has been marginalised on the global plane in the wake of the transformation of the international scene. These critics need to comprehend the significance of the call given by Gorbachev, in the same Fulton speech on May 6, to include that "great country India" among the permanent members of the UN Security Council. This is indeed a tribute to the foreign policy pursued by South Block. This policy has, by and large, retained the original perspective and thrust imparted by Jawaharlal Nehru, another outstanding visionary of the twentieth century.

The cardinal features of this policy, based on Nehru's pronouncements, are: (a) friendship and cooperation with all states, big or small; (b) no alignment with any military pact or alliance as an instrument of peace and reflecting independence of judgement; and (c) not remaining neutral when peace is endangered, freedom menaced, justice threatened or aggression committed. The importance of this policy in today's world situation cannot be overestimated since the Western superpower, in stark contrast to Gorbachev's objective long-term assessment, is adopting a myopic approach and exerting pressures on countries like India through such unilateral actions as the one under Special 301 and the threat of penalty in case of India's acquistion of cryogenic rocket engines and related technology from Russia.

At the same time while preserving, the original strategy our foreign policy must respond to the changing environment bereft of the Cold War confrontation. That New Delhi has already moved in that direction is no secret.Hence its decisions to upgrade diplomatic ties with Israel; build closer relations with countries of the new united Europe with special reference to Germany; enhance interaction at all levels with the US and carve out new avenues of cooperation with Japan. But these must not be taken to the detriment of our national interests–primarily our traditional ties with the Arab world and our self-dignity as a Third World state. The fast changing developments must take into account both the end of the Cold War and the exceedingly overbearing attitude of the US Administration in the new situation characterised not only by the disappearance of the USSR but also the "success" of the Pentagon against Iraq in the Gulf war (although the real success of liquidating Saddam Hussain, one of the major objectives of the US authorities, still remains a far cry).

Similarly, we are duty-bound to develop relations of goodwill with the interim *mujahideen* administration in Kabul headed by Prof Sibgatollah Mojaddidi whose Indian connection is not peripheral. But for this neither should any quarter be given to the fundamentalists nor should the links with the secular elements (like the erstwhile Afghan President, Dr. Najibullah) whom India had all along backed, be severed.

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THE changed situation also underlines that our responses should be different from those in the past on such issues as the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT). Guided by our ardent desire to ensure full and complete disarmanent, we were the first to expose and oppose the discrimination inherent in the call for horizontal non-proliferation of nuclear weapons when vertical non-proliferation was not being effected as a token of generosity towards the nuclear haves, that is, those fortunate few who had gained the status of nuclear powers. But now that tangible steps to eliminate the strategic nuclear armaments have made the element of discrimination in the NPT regime less pronounced than before, our attitude to the NPT should undergo some flexibility. While there is no question of India abandoning the nuclear option, there is also no reason why we should fight shy of discussing all proposals on the subject, including the Pakistani proposal for a five power meet for a regional NPT in South Asia, with all--that is, Pakistan, China and Russia in particular—and not just with the US. Our flexibility on this count would also prevent our adversaries from misinterpreting our position.

What is imperative is that our foreign policy should be geared such as to enable us to play a more active role as a Third World leader within the NAM, G-77 and G-15 for ensuring a better deal for the developing states. Those who underscore the "irrelevance" of the NAM following the burial of the Cold War must realise that the movement has always played a crucial role in building Third World solidarity which is more vital today than in the Cold War days. Of late, economic diplomacy has found prominence in Indian foreign policy.

This must not be isolated from the overall approach of Third World unity for a new international economic order.

Simultaneously, we must dynamically evolve magnanimous postures towards our South Asian neighbours striking an absolutely new path so as to help in the early resolution of outstanding disputes hanging fire for long and assist the forum of the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) acquire an economic dimension as the ASEAN in South-East Asia based on mutually beneficial economic interaction among the constituent members so essential in the light of the deteriorating economic climate punctuated by the growing protectionist barriers in the West. This scenario also calls for closer Indian cooperation with China overcoming past prejudice, and obstacles like the persisting border problem. India's ties with the constituent units of the Commonwealth of Independent States, notably the Central Asian republics, too must be strengthened under the compulsions of the prevailing reality.

As the architect of modern India and the proponent of independent India's foreign policy, Jawaharlal Nehru pointed out in a speech at the US House of Representatives and the Senate on October 13, 1949 that the "objectives of our foreign policy are the preservation of world peace and enlargement of human freedom". These objectives remain as valid today as they were 43 years ago.

Indeed, Nehru had the capacity to foresee the shape of things to come. Speaking at Beijing on October 23, 1954 he predicted: "There can be no East and West ranged against each other in the future. There could be only one world devoting itself in friendly cooperation between the different parts to the advancement of humanity." This is precisely what has happened today. With such a perspective the foreign policy fashioned by the first Prime Minister of independent India has not been of temporary value.

Within the parameters of the holistic approach of such a durable foreign policy tested by time can measures be worked out in tune with the changes in the world arena. But such measures must not undermine, for short-term gains, our national interests or the principles that guided India's foreign policy in the last 45 years since independence, the principles of peace, freedom and democracy which have been vested with new meaning and content in the present global context as we strive today for a better and brighter tomorrow. ■

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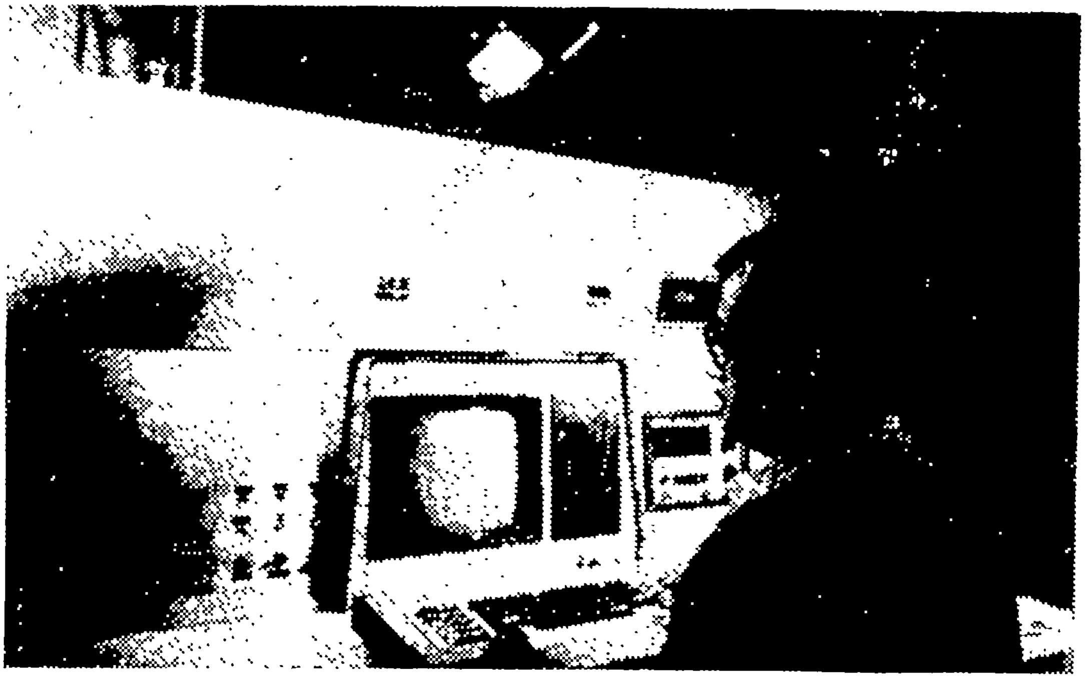

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Einstein on Socialism ● *Anti-Mandal Suicides*

Mainstream

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EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

Guilty at the Top

So, the fat is at last in the fire. The concern over the blatant speculation in the share-market which has shaken the country had to come over our Finance Minister only in driblets and that too after tremendous pressure in Parliament.

Our Finance Minister did know that the Bombay Stock Exchange Sensex began to shoot up instantly with his Budget, to the great applause of the brokers and their colluding bankers. That was the time when the Chairman of the National Housing Bank, Pherwani, had hailed that "the present boom in the market is the beginning of an economic miracle". It was the same Pherwani who earlier had to quit the Unit Trust stewardship because of his record of irregularities, to put it mildly, but was brought back by the present dispensation to head the National Housing Bank, whose corrupt practices have now come to light, and Pherwani had to be sacked. In a few days, the poor thing collapsed and died, overburdened he obviously was with the dimension of the scandal.

Our Finance Minister is made of sterner stuff. He was excited at having liberated the stock market and exclaimed that "the market had to be freed from too much policing and a daddy-knows-best attitude". So, he proudly took the credit for having liberated the market from "too much policing". He seemed to take the credit that the stock market was looking up because of his economic reforms, knowing fully well that this was largely the outcome of unrestrained speculation in which the nationalised banks under the government's control actively colluded. But the Finance Minister seemed to be innocent of that great deception.

On May 4, the Finance Minister coyly said: "I do not franky know what determines the share prices. I also do not lose my sleep because of the fluctuations in the market." Of course, he did not lose his sleep even when Harshad Mehta was hitting the headlines as the big bull of the scam. He turned down the demand for an instant CBI probe, saying that the Reserve Bank was good enough for the job. Presumably, he had hopes of saving friends in high places.

Within two days, the stink rose to high heavens, as it became known that the National Housing Bank was involved neck-deep in the scandal. That led to the downfall and end of Pherwani. By May 11, the Finance Minister had no option but to let the CBI join the probe. What is interesting is that even at that stage, Manmohan Singh had a word of praise for the Chairman of the State Bank of India, who is now forced to step down for his involvement in the

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scandal. The Finance Minister tried to give the impression that there was really no scandal but just "a systems failure"—as he put it.

The Members of Parliament wanted a Joint Parliamentary Committee probe, but the Finance Minister was ready with his reply—no, such a probe would come in the way of the CBI enquiry. He defended the Governor of the Reserve Bank with all his might. And this he repeated right uptil the eve of the arrival of the CBI report, claiming that the RBI Governor enjoyed his confidence. Obviously.

On June 2, the bubble burst. The interim report of the Jankiraman Committee—the RBI panel to which the CBI had been included—found that there was fraud exceeding Rs 3000 crores, and open collusion between bankers and brokers. This is just the tip of the iceberg, as this is only the interim report.

Since then has followed arrests of some of those directly involved like Harshad Mehta and his gang apart from some of the culprits from the State Bank of India and the National Housing Bank—and their assets attached. Maybe a few more will be nabbed in the process. And it is quite possible that the probe panel documents would bring to light the dirty nexus between some political figures and the stock exchange brokers.

Many more skeletons are tumbling out of the cupboard. For instance, it is now disclosed that in the last six months a huge amount of over Rs 10,000 crores raised by public sector undertakings through bonds and debentures had been diverted to manipulate the capital market by a handful of brokers, through the much-publicised portfolio management scheme. The brokers and some of the top banks including some foreign ones have made good money.

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WHAT was the role of the Reserve Bank in this shocking scandal? The Reserve Bank is supposed to be the monitor-cum-guardian of the banking system in the country. It is not that the Reserve Bank bosses were taken unawares by this racket. It is now disclosed that the Reserve Bank Deputy Governor, Amitava Ghosh, had sent a circular as early as July 26, 1991 in which he had alerted the Chairmen of all banks about certain irregular transactions "which they should not be undertaking". And yet there was no stopping such reckless and illegal acts committed by a direct subsidiary of the RBI itself, namely, the National Housing Bank apart from the other banks, big and small. Even when the Sensex figures were shooting up, the Reserve Bank bosses appeared to be unconcerned.

It is important to pinpoint the responsibility for the Reserve Bank's lapses on its Governor, Venkitaramanan. With a record by no means overloaded with integrity, he got the plum post under the Manmohan dispensation, as he had already earned his reputation as a high-level quick-fixer when he was the Finance Secretary. Venkitaramanan seemed to have turned the Nelson's eye to the dirty dealings under his very nose. Would it not be proper to demand—as it has already been done by a number of political leaders—that he should have stepped down, or been sent off on leave, during the course of the investigation? There was good reason why the media reported on the possibility of Venkitaramanan's resignation which Manmohan Singh promptly scotched—making it all the more apparent that the Finance Minister is yet holding out the fond of hope of saving his trusted RBI Governor.

And what about Dr Manmohan Singh himself? He cannot get away by his prattle of a mere "systems failure". Our parliamentary system has no doubt many infirmities. But even within its constraints and shortcomings, accountability is still a watchword. More than thirty years ago, there was the scandal of a deal that a businessman of dubious character pulled off with the LIC; for that a probe was ordered by the government and on the ground that the Finance Minister was found to have orally winked at it he quit his post, though it was known that he personally made no money out of it. Times have changed, and certainly Manmohan Singh would vehemently disown any resemblance of his ethical standards with those of T.T. Krishnamachari. TTK had rebuffed a World Bank diktat, Manmohan Singh has been slavishly carrying out a whole lot of them. And yet, there is good ground for a parliamentary probe into this scandal as has been demanded and the government would be well advised to order it if it does not want to lower itself in the public eye.

Dr Manmohan Singh can hardly claim that he had not been warned. The entire parliamentary proceedings of the last two months bear out the warnings of the scam scandal he had received from all sections of both Houses of Parliament. Even some of his party members wanted him to quit office on this count. Today as thousands of innocent small-income share-holders have lost their savings, would not this at least disturb the Finance Minister's sleep? One can leave this to be sorted out by him with his conscience.

But the parliamentary system insists on ministerial accountability. Can the Narasimha Rao Government afford to flout public opinion on this score? The coming weeks will decide.

June 9 *N.C.*

Is Non-alignment Dead?

N.C.

The demise of the non-aligned movement is the theme of many learned discourses nowadays. One comes across commentators advising the Prime Minister of India to perform the funeral rites of the NAM since it has already expired and only needs to be ceremonially cremated.

This latest fashion in foreign-affairs cliché is based on the argument that the NAM was the product of the Cold War and since the Cold War has blown over and the Soviet Union has ceased to exist, it would be prudent to be in the bandwagon of the supreme superpower of the day, that is, the United States of America. In short, line up behind Washington. This thesis is of course presented with a lot of garnishing and claims to be pragmatic wisdom.

No doubt, the world has vastly changed and the two formidable military alliances, locked in Cold-War confrontation, have disappeared. In fact long before the formal dissolution of the military alliances, many of those who had joined them were coming over to the NAM. Pakistan was a case in point. Obviously, when the Cold War is over, the NAM's original charter has become out of date.

At the same time, it is worth recalling the real motive force behind the non-aligned movement. Immediately after the Second World War, when the two military alliances—the NATO and the Warsaw Pact—had bagged a number of countries to join them, those which stood out and refused to be aligned to the military blocs, were known as the non-aligned. In fact, the NAM as a movement came to be formed more than a decade after India had openly stood out against joining either of the two military alliances led by Washington and Moscow. In those early days, it was as much out of fashion for a country to demarcate itself from those two giant military alliances as it is today to refuse to kowtow to the only superpower of the day that the USA claims to be.

It was not easy in those days for the leaders of a newly-independent country like India, bereft of resources, to stand out of the power-bloc game. In those days too, globalisation was taken to mean signing up with one or the other of the two military alliances and not left out of the company of the high and mighty in international politics. Many a statesman, scholar and media commentator of those days attacked or made fun of India staying away from bloc politics. John Foster Dulles branded non-alignment as sin because it refused to join the crusade against the evil of communism. In those early days, Moscow also was suspicious of non-alignment because with the full blast of the Cold War, the polarisation was so sharp that the maxim was: those who are not with us, must be counted as being against us.

Non-alignment did not have a christening ceremony. As is well-known, the term itself came into usage almost by chance. Nehru and Krishna Menon had to take a lot of pains to clarify that non-alignment was not neutrality, but an assertion of independence in foreign affairs—the refusal to be herded into one military alliance or the other. This independence of action has throughout been the essence of non-alignment. A non-aligned country would exercise its own judgement—and not be guided by nor tied down to the compulsion of any particular military bloc. It might side with the stand of one or the other of the blocs on a specific issue, as guided by its own independent judgement. This principle remains valid today—perhaps more emphatically—when instead of two superpowers to choose from, one superpower is claiming to impose its order on the entire world.

Apart from the principle, what is the reality of today in which that principle has to be applied? In the new world after the Cold War, in this brief spell of just about a year, the US diktat—political, military and economic—is sought to be enforced over the rest of the world. The type of internal political system a country must have and the pattern of economy it must follow—these traits of a sovereign state are being dictated to by the West, mainly by the US. The United Nations, for all practical purposes, is virtually sought to be transformed into a rubber-stamp of the US Administration. The nuclear weapon has to be in effect a monopoly of Washington: it may be kept by a few others among its allies only by its consent, and on no other account. If independence of stand in international affairs was in the past the guiding principle of non-alignment in a world dominated by two giant military alliances, doesn't it become more relevant today in a world in which one supreme power is trying to establish its hegemony?

The design of the world economy that is sought to be imposed also makes it abundantly clear that a handful of countries have been trying to control and corner all the resources of the technological era. While the developing nations are being ordered to open up their economies for the more powerful to penetrate, they themselves are putting up protection walls, debarring the entry of the others. This is the message of the Dunkel Draft and Carla Hills' *fatwas*

All this makes it abundantly clear that while the East-West confrontation has disappeared, a more fearsome confrontation is fast emerging between the affluent North and the impoverished South. This is spreading to every field, as could be seen in the tension that marks the current Earth Summit at Rio. While technology is fast getting a global dimension, the world's wealth and power are sought to be grabbed by a handful of powers with Washington in the lead.

In such a grim scenario, the relevance of non-alignment becomes all the more emphatic. The countries which cherish to retain their right to independence, have to stand together here and now. It is extremely significant that China which twenty years ago used to look down upon the NAM with condescension, has today formally joined it, and has been stressing the urgency of the developing countries standing together, lest they would be bullied by the developed group.

No doubt there has to be serious in-depth thinking as to how the South—where the overwhelming majority of humankind lives and where the natural wealth and the renewable sources of energy are in abundance—should design its platform. The emergence of G-15, for instance, is no accident. It is the response of an urgent necessity.

If freedom, in the ultimate analysis, is the recognition of a necessity, then there is no question of the need for the South to build up a sustained, organised movement. No matter whatever name such as movement gives unto itself the message that the non-aligned conveyed, remains as valid as it was four decades ago. All the claptrap of non-alignment being dead is but the spit and splutter of the ideology of the lords and masters of the North. ■

VIEW FROM THE OTHER SIDE

India-Pakistan in Perspective

NASIM ZEHRA

India's decision to expel two Pakistani diplomats in response to the Mittal episode came as no surprise. This despite Nawaz Sharif calling up Prime Minister Narasimha Rao within hours after the incident and stressing upon the need to work out ways to avoid ugly diplomatic events.

The overreaction can perhaps be better understood in the perspective of New Delhi's attitude towards the Foreign Secretaries' talks.

India has been less than enthusiastic about these talks which Islamabad views as a "negotiating forum". India, on the other hand, finds itself hopelessly cornered at the negotiating table, on the question of Kashmir.

Also, on most other bilateral problems South Block must know that its position is legally untenable. Besides Kashmir, disagreements exist over the Siachen Glacier, the Wuller Barrage, the Sir Creek and the Jinnah House. For instance, over the Siachen Glacier, where the Indian army moved into the disputed territory in April 1984, the June 1989 Indo-Pak Agreement called for redeployment of troops at the pre-1984 boundaries. Now in 1992 instead of military officers meeting to merely decide where to redeploy, Indians claim "technical talks have broken down and there is need to infuse new political blood".

Similarly, in the case of the Jinnah House, New Delhi went back on its earlier commitment. In 1978 the present Prime Minister Narasimha Rao personally announced in the Lok Sabha, India's decision to lease Jinnah House to Pakistan at a monthly rent of Rs 37,000. Now, 14 years later, the House in Bombay is decaying. New Delhi has not only backed off from its 1978 commitment but has even disallowed the Quaid-i-Azam's grandson from appointing a gardener to look after his family house!

New Delhi is under pressure from the Maharashtra Lok Sabha members of Shiv Sena, which claims leasing Jinnah House to Pakistan will make it become "a symbol of Pakistan". On the Wuller Barrage issue too India has gone ahead with its planning and construction in direct violation of the 1964 Indus Water Treaty.

Against this backdrop, New Delhi would naturally vote against substantive dialogue with Islamabad. Instead, it would rather engage in aggressive propaganda against Islamabad invoking the "terrorist" and the "Islamic fundamentalist" themes. This enables India to feed into the Western paranoia of "terrorism" and "Islamic fundamentalism", sideline the question of Kashmiri self-determination and deflect world attention from gross violation of human rights in the Valley.

Undoubtedly, the Mittal incident does not qualitatively change the texture of Indo-Pak relations. It merely reinforces the deeper problems, listed above, that have haunted the Indo-Pak relationship. Ultimately only enlightened political forces in both countries can deal with these problems. And given the nature of bilateral problems the onus is more on Indian politicians.

In Indian polity today, extremist political forces are steering the discourse towards a self-destructive path. On issues like Kashmir, a debate is being conducted along religious and cultural lines. At a recent New Delhi seminar on the Kashmir crisis, BJP's Murli Manohar Joshi, in the name of the "ancient Indian civilisation", advocated exercising of "hard options" including "full scale army action against the Pakistani aided terrorists in Kashmir".

(Continued on page 35)

The author is a distinguished Pakistani columnist

The Shape of Things to Come

ACHIN VANAIK

Never has the need for a socialist alternative to capitalism been greater, never have the prospects for it been bleaker.

With capitalism at this point in history globally triumphant, warnings about the pyrrhic nature of its victory must seem unduly alarmist if not absurd. But the belief that capitalism is the answer to the development needs of the Second and Third Worlds is based not on its positive achievements but on the negative failures of its principal rival. It is not the success of South Korean capitalism that has made the notion of capitalism as the guaranteed route to prosperity so popular.

Precisely because the notion has no solid foundations of its own that it will not survive disillusionment. The logic of profit-seeking private accumulation of capital cannot resolve the twin dilemmas of our times—growing polarisation of wealth, prosperity and control over resources and deepening ecological degradation. If the 75-year history of actually existing communism has a way of reducing the range of viable excuses for its performance, does not the 150-year or more history of actually existing industrial capitalism have a way of doing the same? How long will people buy the excuse that the poverty of the poorer two-thirds of the globe or of its population is its own fault, remediable in principle via neo-liberal economic solutions?

If it is clear that communism cannot match the productive efficiency of capitalism in its most advanced outposts, is it not also clear that the *sine qua non* of capitalist prosperity is its confinement to a permanent minority, even if that minority can within limits expand.

Between 1965 and 1990 the difference between living standards in Europe on one hand and India and China on the other rose from 40-to-1 to 70-to-1. In the eighties 800 million people (more than the combined population of the USA, EEC and Japan) became destitutes, while one out of three children go hungry. If every human being had an equal share of food at a diet having less than half the US consumption of animal-based calories, and there was no redistribution of any other goods whatsoever, the globe could not sustain its current population of five billion. With a totally vegetarian diet and equal food distribution, the upper limit for the world's sustainable population is six billion, a figure that should be reached by the year 2000. If the current US food production (and nothing else) were to be generalised, we would have to kill off half the world's population. One has not so far even mentioned the ecological devastation that would accompany such efforts at generalising the OECD living standards throughout the world—depleting ozone layer, decimated forests, accumulating nuclear waste, gene pools/myriad species dying out at an accelerating rate, etc.

The author is a Senior Fellow, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi

Forget the fantasies of our neo-liberals who think that if only the tiger of Indian capitalism is unchained can we enter an era of unprecedented mass prosperity for all. China, the boom economy of the eighties, can never hope to emulate the OECD no matter how capitalist it becomes. The idea that India can follow the same route when it has not even equalled the level of mass welfarism that China achieved precisely because it did not pursue for decades a capitalist pattern of growth, is an even more dangerous self-delusion.

The possiblity of a decent, humane existence for all Indians is real enough and achievable; the possibility of India joining the ranks of the OECD countries is zero.

What the new economic policy will do then is polarise Indian society as never before. Two kinds of border patrols will be set up: one organised on a global scale with the US as the head; the other kind located within the Third World countries. The purpose of both kinds will be the same—to protect the Haves and what they have from the Have-nots and their desperations. Since the two most important issues of the next half century will be ecology and population growth we can fully expect the elaboration of ruthless new policies which will aim to keep control of the world's resources in the hands of the well-off across and within countries. The world's population has doubled in the last fifty years. It will come close to doubling in the next 50 years.

Despite the fact that poverty eradication is well known to be the best form of birth control and precisely because poverty eradication on the scale required will not come about, the pressure for utterly callous forms of birth contol/prevention will grow enormously. Today, the Morris King type of 'solution' of not giving primary health care to infants of poor families in the Third World is still seen as obscene. It will seem less so in the coming years. It and similar policies will be advocated not only by an OECD bloc determined not to give up in any significant way its levels of prosperity, it will also be advocated by the better off in the poor countries themselves. Yes, they will say, poverty

(Continued on page 35)

Office of Laser

D. BANDYOPADHYAY

I reached Delhi early in the morning from Mussoorie. My return flight was booked on the next morning. I had the whole day in Delhi.

Lazily, I started flipping through my old notebook names and telephone numbers of my friends in Delhi. I decided to avoid those friends of mine who were lodged in the mighty Bhavans and who were engaged in the arduous and tortuous task of dismantling the bureaucratic apparatus under the new liberalisation policy in a manner that after total debureaucratisation the bureaucracy remained as powerful as before. A tricky job indeed, under any regime. Hence, they should be allowed to pursue their noble objective with single-minded devotion unhindered by any friend or foe.

I chose a friend who was the head of a peripheral autonomous organisation and whose office was located near a famous canteen which served delectable South Indian delicacies during the lunch hour. I rang him up in his residence. His response was prompt and warm. He agreed to spend sometime with me late in the forenoon. I was delighted because that would be nearer the lunch time. Knowing the ways about in Delhi, I requested him to inform his reception desk.

Obviously, the message had reached. Instead of the frown and the frozen stare, I found a flicker of friendly smile when I announced my name to the receptionist. He promptly pushed the register towards me to fill in the empty columns to enable him to write out the entry pass. This was the usual and often irritating ritual a casual visitor had to undergo in every office in Delhi. This register, however, looked slightly unfamiliar. I could not make out whether the office was using an old and discarded register under the present economy drive, or it adopted an altered format to proclaim its autonomy. After the name the next column in the ordinary register was for designation and address. For a retired officer it was easy to fill up this column by putting 'ex' before the last post held. I noticed that it always impressed the receptionist to make out the pass quickly. But in this register in the relevant column it wanted to know the occupation. It put me in a spot. I did not have any occupation after my retirement. I could have put in anything, but being an ex-civil servant of three and a half decades' vintage I could not knowingly write anything incorrect in a government document. Truthfully I recorded "enjoyment of leisure". Receptionists in Delhi were trained to read from the wrong side. So as soon I completed my writing he asked me under which Ministry "leisure" would come. I was not prepared for this question. But as I enjoyed my leisure mostly in my home, I involuntarily mumbled: 'home'. I thought he did not hear it. But he not only heard it, he advised me to write after 'leisure' Ministry of Home Affairs.

The author is a former Executive Director, Asian Development Bank and now the Chairman, Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta.

That put me in a fix. I knew that truthfulness often created problems. But I did not anticipate that my impulse to tell the truth would put me in this predicament. Though he misunderstood me, I could not retract. If I did so, he would have formed a bad impression about me and also about his boss who kept such lowly company. I could not let that happen, come what may.

I started thinking furiously to find an escape route from this impasse. I had never worked under the Home Ministry. Hence, I could not directly mention the MHA anywhere. Since my enjoyment of leisure depended at least partly on the pension I received, as a pensioner, I thought, I could claim a dubious and tenuous relationship with the Department of Personnel, Public Grievance and Pension.

This Department had the unique reputation of promptly responding to any written grievance in a printed card advising the correspondent that all his problems had been referred to the appropriate authority for proper redressal. A serious petititoner then could have the rare opportunity of research to find out which one of the half a million legal, quasi-legal and local authorities in India would have the privilege of dealing with his case. It being a life-time research work, the petitioner would be busy for the rest of his life and his pursuit of truth and justice might also give him some happiness which was denied to him when his grievance arose.

But my problem was that this Department did not function under the MHA. Suddenly in a flash I remembered that the mighty Establishment Officer, one of whose minions had signed my appointment letter thirtyseven years ago, then functioned under the Home Ministry. Thereafter, due to the operation of the inexorable law of mutation of governmental gene, it had flowered into an independent and powerful department.

As I had been thinking furiously, I faltered in writing. The receptionist noticed it. He offered his ball pen thinking that mine had dried up in the Delhi heat. I took his pen and wrote down in an illegible hand "Department of Personnel, Public Grievance and Pension formerly under MHA". Only 'MHA' was written in bold letters.

The receptionist was a knowledgeable person. He remarked almost to himself that all governments always announced economy and always opened new offices. An earlier government created the Department of Computer. And this government while thinking about giving the golden handshake to its old employees, established the new office of leisure. Well, while the old employees stagnated and languished, if someone got a new job, in these hard days, it was not altogether bad. Why grudge him?

After this soliloquy, he handed over the pass to me with a smile. I looked at the pass. It showed below my name: "Office of Laser, Ministry of Home Affairs".

His genuine broad smile conveyed a message of congratulation to me being a beneficiary of the newly created occupation of enjoyment of leisure. ■

Why Socialism?

ALBERT EINSTEIN

Is it advisable for one who is not an expert on economic and social issues to express views on the subject of socialism? I believe for a number of reasons that it is.

Let us first consider the question from the point of view of scientific knowledge. It might appear that there are no essential methodological differences between astronomy and economics: scientists in both fields attempt to discover laws of general acceptability for a circumscribed group of phenomena in order to make the interconnection of these phenomena as clearly understandable as possible. But in reality such methodological differences do exist. The discovery of general laws in the field of economics is made difficult by the circumstance that observed economic phenomena are often affected by many factors which are very hard to evaluate separately. In addition, the experience which has accumulated since the beginning of the so-called civilized period of human history has—as is well known—been largely influenced and limited by causes which are by no means exclusively economic in nature. For example, most of the major states of history owed their existence to conquest. The conquering people established themselves, legally and economically, as the privileged class of the conquered country. They seized for themselves a monopoly of the land ownership and appointed a priesthood from among their own ranks. The priests, in control of education, made the class division of society into a permanent institution and created a system of values by which the people were thenceforth, to a large extent unconsciously, guided in their social behavior.

But historic tradition is, so to speak, of yesterday; nowhere have we really overcome what Thorstein Veblen called the "predatory phase" of human development. The observable economic facts belong to that phase and even such laws as we can derive from them are not applicable to other phases. Since the real purpose of socialism is precisely to overcome and advance beyond the predatory phase of human development, economic science in its present state can throw little light on the socialist society of the future.

Second, socialism is directed towards a social-ethical end. Science, however, cannot create ends and, even less, instill them in human beings; science, at most, can supply the means by which to attain certain ends. But the ends themselves are conceived by personalities with lofty ethical ideals and—if these ends are not stillborn, but vital and vigorous—are adopted and carried forward by those many human beings who, half unconsciously, determine the slow evolution of society.

This article by Einstein was first published in the well-known American Marxist journal, Monthly Review, *in its inaugural issue (May 1949).*

For these reasons, we should be on guard not to overestimate science and scientific methods when it is a question of human problems; and we should not assume that experts are the only ones who have a right to express themselves on questions affecting the organization of society.

Innumerable voices have been asserting for some time now that human society is passing through a crisis, that its stability has been gravely shattered. It is characteristic of such a situation that individuals feel indifferent or even hostile towards the group, small or large, to which they belong. In order to illustrate my meaning, let me record here a personal experience. I recently discussed with an intelligent and well-disposed man the threat of another war, which in my opinion would seriously endanger the existence of mankind, and I remarked that only a supra-natural organization would offer protection from that danger. Thereupon my visitor, very calmly and coolly, said to me: "Why are you so deeply opposed to the disappearance of the human race?"

I am sure that as little as a century ago no one would have so lightly made a statement of this kind. It is the statement of a man who has striven in vain to attain an equilibrium within himself and has more or less lost hope of succeeding. It is the expression of a painful solitude and isolation from which so many people are suffering these days. What is the cause? Is there a way out?

It is easy to raise such questions, but difficult to answer them with any degree of assurance. I must try, however, as best I can, although I am very conscious of the fact that our feelings and strivings are often contradictory and obscure and that they cannot be expressed in easy and simple formulas.

Man is, at one and the same time, a solitary being and a social being. As a solitary being, he attempts to protect his own existence and that of those who are closest to him, to satisfy his personal desires, and to develop his innate abilities. As a social being, he seeks to gain the recognition and affection of his fellow human beings, to share in their pleasures, to comfort them in their sorrows, and to improve their conditions of life. Only the existence of these varied, frequently conflicting, strivings accounts for the special character of a man, and their specific combination determines the extent to which an individual can achieve an inner equilibrium and can contribute to the well-being of society. It is quite possible that the relative strength of these two drives is, in the main, fixed by inheritance. But the personality that finally emerges is largely formed by the environment in which a man happens to find himself during his development, by the structure of the society in which he grows up, by the tradition of that society, and by its appraisal of particular types of behaviour. The abstract concept "society" means to the individual human being the sum total of his direct and indirect relations to his contemporaries and to all the people of earlier generations. The individual is able to think, feel, strive, and work by himself; but he depends so much upon society—in his physical, intellectual, and emotional existence—that it is impossible to think of him, or to understand him, outside the framework of society. It is "society" which provides man with food, clothing, a home, the tools of work, language, the forms of thought, and most of the content of thought; his life is made possible through the labor and the accomplishments of the many millions past and present who are all hidden behind the small word "society".

It is evident, therefore, that the dependence of the individual upon society is a fact of nature which cannot be abolished—just as in the case of ants and bees. However, while the whole life process of ants and bees is fixed down to the smallest detail by rigid, hereditary instincts, the social patterns and interrelationships of human beings are very variable and susceptible to change. Memory, the capacity to make new combinations, the gift of oral communication have made possible developments among human beings which are not dictated by biological necessities. Such developments manifest themselves in traditions, institutions, and organizations; in literature; in scientific and engineering accomplishments; in works of art. This explains how it happens that, in a certain sense, man can influence his life through his own conduct, and that in this process conscious thinking and wanting can play a part.

Man acquires at birth, through heredity, a biological constitution which we must consider fixed and unalterable, including the natural urges which are characteristic of the human species. In addition, during his lifetime, he acquires a cultural constitution which he adopts from society through communication and through many other types of influences. It is this cultural constitution which, with the passage of time, is subject to change and which determines to a very large extent the relationship between the individual and society. Modern anthropology has taught us, through comparative investigation of so-called primitive cultures, that the social behaviour of human beings may differ greatly, depending upon prevailing cultural patterns and the types of organization which predominate in society. It is on this that those who are striving to improve the lot of man may ground their hopes: human beings are *not* condemned, because of their biological constitution, to annihilate each other or to be at the mercy of a cruel, self-inflicted fate.

If we ask ourselves how the structure of society and the cultural attitude of man should be changed in order to make human life as satisfying as possible, we should constantly be conscious of the fact that there are certain conditions which we are unable to modify. As mentioned before, the biological nature of man is, for all practical purposes, not subject to change. Furthermore, technological and demographic developments of the last few centuries have created conditions which are here to stay. In relatively densely settled populations with the goods which are indispensable to their continued existence, an extreme division of labor and a highly-centralised productive apparatus are absolutely necessary. The time—which, looking back, seems so idyllic—is gone forever when individuals or relatively small groups could be completely self-sufficient. It is only a slight exaggeration to say that mankind constitutes even now a planetary community of production and consumption.

I have now reached the point where I may indicate briefly what to me constitutes the essence of the crisis of our time. It concerns the relationship of the individual to society. The individual has become more conscious than ever of his dependence upon society. But he does not experience this dependence as a positive asset, as an organic tie, as a protective force, but rather as a threat to the natural rights, or even to his economic existence. Moreover, his position in society is such that the egotistical drives of his make-up are constantly being accentuated, while his social drives, which are by nature weaker, progressively deteriorate. All human beings, whatever their position in society, are suffering from this process of deterioration. Unknowingly prisoners of their own egotism, they feel insecure, lonely, and deprived of the naive, simple, and unsophisticated enjoyment of life. Man can find meaning in life, short and perilous as it is, only through devoting himself to society.

The economic anarchy of capitalist society as it exists today is, in my opinion, the real source of the evil. We see before us a huge community of producers the members of which are unceasingly striving to deprive each other of the fruits of their collective labor—not by force, but on the whole in faithful compliance with legally established rules. In this respect, it is important to realize that the means of production—that is to say, the entire productive capacity that is needed for producing consumer goods as well as additional capital goods—may legally be, and for the most part are, the private property of individuals.

For the sake of simplicity, in the discussion that follows I shall call "workers" of those who do not share in the ownership of the means of production—although this does not quite correspond to the customary use of the term. The owner of the means of production is in a position to purchase the labour power of the worker. By using the means of production, the worker produces new goods which become the property of the capitalist. The essential point about this process is the relation between what the worker produces and what he is paid, both measured in terms of real value. Insofar as the labor contract is "free", what the worker receives is determined not by the real value of the goods he produces, but by his minimum needs and by the capitalists' requirements for labor power in relation to the number of workers competing for jobs. It is important to understand that even in theory the payment of the worker is not determined by the value of his product.

Private capital tends to become concentrated in few hands, partly because of competition among the capitalists, and partly because technological development and the increasing division of labor encourage the formation of larger units of production at the expense of the smaller ones. The result of these developments is an oligarchy of private capital the enormous power of which cannot be effectively checked even by a democratically organized political society. This is true since the members of legislative bodies are selected by political parties, largely financed or otherwise influenced by private capitalists who, for all practical purposes, separate the electorate from the legislature. The consequence is that the representatives of the people do not in fact sufficiently protect the interests of the underprivileged sections of the population. Moreover, under existing conditions, private capitalists inevitably control, directly or indirectly, the main sources of information (press, radio, education). It is thus extremely difficult, and indeed in most cases quite impossible, for the individual citizen to come to objective conclusions and to make intelligent use of his political rights.

The situation prevailing in an economy based on the private ownership of capital is thus characterized by two main principles: first, means of production (capital) are privately owned and the owners dispose of them as they see fit; second, the labor contract is free. Of course, there is no such thing as a *pure* capitalist society in this sense. In particular, it should be noted that the workers, through long and bitter political struggles, have succeeded in securing a somewhat improved form of the "free labor contract" for certain categories of workers. But taken as a whole, the present day economy does not differ much from "pure" capitalism.

Production is carried on for profit, not for use. There is no provision that all those able and willing to work will always be in a position to find employment; an "army of unemployed" almost always exists. The worker is constantly in fear of losing his job. Since unemployed and poorly paid workers do not provide a profitable market, the production of consumers' goods is restricted, and great hardship is the consequence. Technological progress frequently results in more unemployment rather than in an easing of the burden of work for all. The profit motive, in conjunction with competition among capitalists, is responsible for an instability in the accumulation and utilization of capital which leads to increasingly severe depression. Unlimited competition leads to a huge waste of labor, and to that crippling of the social consciousness of individuals which I mentioned before.

This crippling of individuals I consider the worst evil of capitalism. Our whole educational system suffers from this evil. An exaggerated competitive attitude is inculcated into the student, who is trained to worship acquisitive success as a preparation for his future career.

I am convinced there is only *one* way to eliminate these grave evils, namely through the establishment of a socialist economy, accompanied by an educational system which would be oriented toward social goals. In such an economy, the means of production are owned by society itself and are utilized in a planned fashion. A planned economy, which adjusts production to the needs of the community, would distribute the work to be done among all those able to work and would guarantee a livelihood to every man, woman, and child. The education of the individual, in addition to promoting his own innate abilities, would attempt to develop in him a sense of responsibility for his fellow men in place of the glorification of power and success in our present society.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to remember that a planned economy is not yet socialism. A planned economy as such may be accompanied by the complete enslavement of the individual. The achievement of socialism requires the solution of some extremely difficult socio-political problems: how is it possible, in view of the far-reaching centralization of political and economic power, to prevent bureaucracy from becoming all-powerful and overweening? How can the rights of the individual be protected and therewith a democratic counter-weight to the power of bureaucracy be assured?

Clarity about the aims and problems of socialism is of greatest significance in our age of transition. Since, under present circumstances, free and unhindered discussion of these problems has come under a powerful taboo, I consider the foundation of this magazine to be an important public service.

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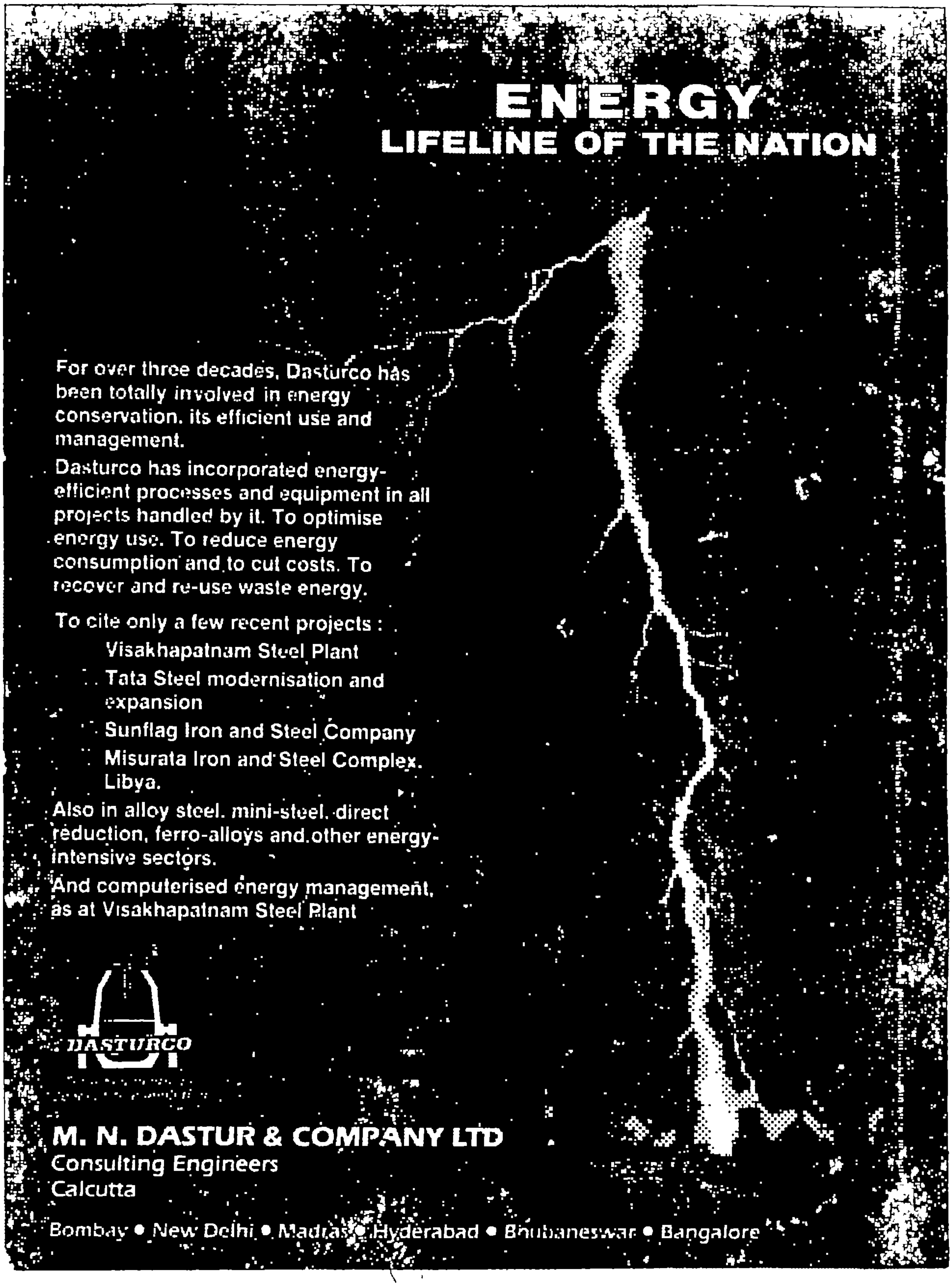

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Capitalism and Colonialism

Global Historical Context

RAJNI KOTHARI

In order to properly perceive the world setting in which the Third World countries like India and, in particular, the poorer sections of these countries are likely to be further exploited and colonised, it is necessary to understand the emerging structure of global power in the coming years.

Politically, in respect of the relations between states, there has taken place a dramatic change in the system of power relations that has prevailed almost ever since the end of the Second World War. What we had was at once a bipolar and a tripolar world. It was a mistake to have described it as a bipolar world in which it was assumed that only the two superpowers mattered and between themselves decided the fate of the world. It was no doubt predominantly bipolar in the military-strategic sphere and because of the dangers inherent in an increasingly escalating arms race, including the possibility of annihilation of the human race, attention was focussed so exclusively on the superpower rivalry and, hence, domination of the world. But outside this militarised view of the world there existed a wider political structure of both power relations and other issues on the agenda of the world which went far beyond the bipolar definition of "world order" The large majority of the states that constituted the world, among thesmelves representing the bulk of the human population, which may have been individually weak and vulnerable but which together could not be wished away, nor was it possible to co-opt most of them in military alliance and security blocs, lay outside the bipolar definition of world affairs. Many of them also acted collectively—the non aligned movement, the G-77, the OPEC challenge to the world status quo and, following the OPEC challenge, the search for a New International Economic Order (NIEO).

More importantly, it was the existence of a Third Pole and its claim to represent such a large part of human aspirations and to engage in the task of redefining the human agenda, which also produced a body of truly global public opinion in which citizens, intellectuals and activists from all parts of the world participated. In course of time (with the deepening of the global crisis) these latter engaged themselves in a variety of new social movements, and a new spurge of consciousness. Through all this the inherent instability of the bipolar military and strategic balance was held in check. What now appears to be coming to an end, then, is not just the balance and mutual deterrence provided by bipolarity but also the more dynamic initiatives and mediating roles for moving towards a more just and equitable and hence more stable and sustainable world order in which a larger arena of states and peoples was involved.

Institutionally too, there was the moderating role of the United Nations, moderating the results of the arms race and the race for global hegemony as between two competing ideologies but also overtime providing for forum of opinions as well as action for the marginalised and the weak, the remaining vestiges of imperialism and, of course the more basic human entities such as the children of the world, the women, the millions of refugees around the world, the tribals and indigenous peoples, the regional cultures and civilisations, above all the poor of the world in the service of whom such a large part of the United Nations network of institutions and the non-governmental network of activists have been devoted. What made all this possible, institutionally and politically, economically and culturally, was the broad acceptance by the nations of the world of the "development agenda". Today one faces the prospect of this going under as well. For, almost overnight, the United Nations has found itself reeling under the hegemonic clout of Western capitalist powers and, among them, despite the broader spectrum of economic power, the predominant role of the United States. It may sound paradoxical, even ironic that just at a time when the world was supposed to be moving towards increasing the scales of disarmament and was becoming one in which military power was declining as a factor to reckon with, it is precisely because of its military

This contribution by the author was presented at the National Seminar in Defence of Sovereignty held in New Delhi (June 5-6, 1992).

preponderance and capacity to indulge in bloody adventures like the Gulf war and the ongoing or impending wars against Libya, Cuba and the like that the United States has been able to continue as the "Number One" power of the world. It may be the most indebted country of the world, facing a recession at home, in the grp of growing poverty, unemployment and lack of shelter and ordinary means of livelihood for millions of its people, as also facing the most serious racial and class wars in its history, and yet it manages to continue to be the "Number One" that is able to call the shots and move round the world like a big bully and tyrant.

With the dramatic erosion of the socialist world and the near collapse of the Third World—as well as the idea of a Third World which would have offered a (third) alternative—alongside the socialist alternative—there has emerged a wide vacuum, an unnerving and frightening vacuum that poses the prospect of returning to the "law of the jungle", at least in the conduct of international affairs but perhaps also, as a consequence thereof, in the conduct of the governments and vested interests domestically as well. The imposition of the market model and the ideology of privatisation on such a de-institutionalised and disembodied structure of reality may well be imagined. But more on this shortly. For the moment it is enough to note that in the emerging vacuum that is likely to unfold in the coming years--vacuum both in the power structure of the world and in the institutional domain--the only recourse and stratagem left to the governments and other centres of power will be that of *realpolitik*. And this time round (unlike in the long transition after the Napoleonic wars and the Vienna Congress) it is going to be realpolitik without a framework of norms and conventions and an overriding liberal international set of values and limits, giving rise to growing normlessness, insensibility to the human condition, and an increasing resort to bullying and to not just threats but, off and on, carrying out those threats so that no one dare any more challenge the omnipresence of a so-called "unipolar" world order. (Logically, of course, there cannot be a unipolar world; polarity assumes more than one poles. But, then, we are fast moving into a world that will have neither logic nor rationality to it. What is more, the American dream has all along consisted of casting the whole world after its image, of constantly moving frontiers, of a dynamic integration and homogenisation of the human race which can, under its aegis, be made a wonderful thing to live in.)

In the new realpolitik that is likely to be played out through its various combinations of actors and initiatives, as different from the earlier periods of instability and transition, there will be much more than the normal play of economic, financial and technological power. This is largely because the relative autonomy of both the states and the state system from the world corporate capitalist structure is fast coming to an end. So that, for instance, the role of diplomacy in the conduct of foreign relations, or of professionals working on the problems of poverty or of bridging the large gaps between societies and regions are likely to be overshadowed by the logic of world capitalism and the need to integrate diverse economies and markets (including various social systems underlying production relations at different levels) are integrated into one large world market and the global system of finance and management. Not only do we face a fast changing world scenario of power relations, we also face a fast changing nature of capitalism, both in the extent of its global reach and in its defining characteristics.

First, the relations of production are going to be much more induced by technology, and hi-tech at that. In the past too technological changes mattered a lot in defining both the means and the relations of production but the latter were also determined by many other factors, particularly the nature of property relations and the distribution of land and other productive assets, the role of the state in this respect, and the conditions shaping monopoly formations in different societies. Furthermore, there did exist the socialist alternative and, though in a much less clear-cut manner, certain Third World alternatives. Now and in the coming years these legal and political (as well as social) diversities within the capitalist model and beyond it are all likely to be influenced and driven forward by technology fixes dictated by the advance guard of capitalist development. The model of capitalism that seeks to penetrate and integrate the whole world is fundamentally a technological model.

Second, there has taken place a major transformation in the institutional domain within which world capitalism has been advancing. The emergence of multinational corporations as dominant structures within which technological development, scientific R&D as well as capital accumulation and fiscal modelling of the economy are taking place has changed so many of the "rules of the game" under capitalism. The MNC represents a major mutation in the evolution of human institutions and macro social and economic structures, also influencing the nature of the state in diverse settings.

Third, and this follows from the first two dimensions, capitalism is both itself becoming and rendering other structures of trade and commerce integrationist, undermining or co-opting hitherto unintegrated economic and social structures. That such an integrative thrust will leave out large sections of different societies and particularly the poor as well as peripheral communities (tribal, forest-based, nomadic and others) is of course true. But when one talks of the world capitalist system one is not talking of the world as a whole but only that part of it which has access to the modern state, the modern market and modern technology. Those who cannot join this powerful drive towards restructuring human arrangements will have to fend for themsevles as in any case they are not only marginal but for most purposes redundant and unwanted.

Fourth, central to the drive towards integrating diverse societies into a world market is the single most powerful engine of homogenising the globe: consumerism and its enormous spread across societies and across classes. By making everyone, irrespective of social background or demographic characteristics, want the same things and catch up with those who have already had them, consumerism has become the dominant engine of growth of modern capitalism.

Fifth, such a model of capitalism depends very much on the revolution in communications and information technology that is also penetrating diverse societies and reducing them all to a few common denominators.

And sixth, as part of the new economic and political imperialism known as "globalisation" there is taking place a growing colonisation of rural hinterlands and land masses. For a long time these had been left out of the global capitalist thrust as they were thought of as too backward or unavailable to industrial and commercial penetration. But with the growing importance of consumer goods of the upper and middle class variety in the overall scheme of things, there has taken place quite a change in the attitude towards rural farmlands, wastelands, social forestry areas and even deserts, as well as, of course, riverbeds and oceans. The global capitalist class is also becoming the global land grabber. (Pepsi is only a forerunner of a lot more to come.) And the global merchant in the produce and loot of natural resources and the environment of the Third World (despite the great showmanship of the UNCED). No wonder then that slogans like land reforms are making no headway anywhere anymore. Also, no wonder that more and more proposals for investments and collaborations from abroad are directed to consumer needs of the elite classes and less and less for infrastructure and other projects of industrialisation.

Such an economic and technological undergirding of the new world order necessarily calls for a changed institutional structuring of the world. First, the nation-state as the basic constituent unit of the world will be increasingly overpowered (if not sidelined) by the MNCs supplemented by global financial institutions like the World Bank, IMF, GATT and a series of emerging Conventions (the MEGA Convention being only the first of that), together concentrating massive power, resources and instrumentalities. With this, even at the world level, there is already taking place (as already indicated earlier) a marginalisation of the United Nations and its various socio-economic and cultural agencies (like the UNCTAD, UNDP, UNICEF, ILO and UNESCO) by the growing influence and power of the World Bank, IMF, and cognate institutions (like the Asian Development Bank). To the extent the United Nations (particularly through the Security Council) can be made use of, it will be given due importance, even increased importance than was the case before the Gulf war. But in other ways and for all other purposes what will matter will be the at once economic and political restructuring of the world by the Brettonwoods institutions, greatly facilitated by the almost worldwide acceptance of privatisation and globalisation as ways out of the so-called "economic crisis" facing the Third World countries like India. This basic shift in the institutional superstructure of world capitalism and its integrative drive is crucial to the "new world order" that was announced by the US President and has been by and large accepted by both the erstwhile socialist and current Third World elites.

II

SUCH a texturing of global power and resources need not be accepted as something determined and irreversible. There is considerable flux in the current historical process, one that is inherently unstable and likely to give rise to growing class and ethnic conflicts. Already, the bullying methods employed by the US and the US dominated agencies are producing countervailing forces and strengthening the voices of dissent that were there from the very beginning but were not heeded by national elites and bureaucrats and all but a few of the economists and social scientists who were far too convinced of the dominant paradigm of development. These dissenting voices are no longer that marginal or considered too "idealistic" or motivated by ideological fixes that had become out of date.

Even the "pragmatists" among policy-makers, public figures, writers and commentators in the mass media and other opinion-makers are expressing doubts about the new package and getting alarmed at the price to be paid in respect of the autonomy and stability of the state that they were earlier willing to sacrifice at the altar of the Market. Meanwhile, the very regions that looked like having "collapsed" before the march of the MNCs—Russia, Eastern Europe, China on the one hand and leading nations of the Third World on the other—are likely to face domestic pressures and unforeseen consequences of the new policies as well as nationalist protest against *Pax Americana*. This too will reinforce the forces of dissent and lend new legitimacy to those who had all along argued for an alternative model of development.

The basic assumption of the new policy package—more and more investment of capital from abroad and wide welcome to India as a part of the global marketplace—is already being questioned as, in the meanwhile, it has dealt serious damage to what had been a well thought out set of institutions and practices following the broad acceptance of the state as a pivot around which they had been structured. It was also a pivot around which international economic relations had evolved. The precipitate dismantling of so many bulwarks of accountability at home and immunity from external influences is going to make us highly vulnerable to the latter and increasingly fragile and destabilised internally. With all this, restlessness and public protest will be on the increase and there will take place a climactic crash of the so-called "radical alternative" of structural adjustment and globalisation.

The same state or rather the government is also being subjected to other pressures—the GATT, 301, Rocket Deal, NPT, falling in line in voting at the United Nations, making us move away from the non-aligned movement and G-77 and soliciting our mediation with radical regimes in the Third World on behalf of the world status quo. Such a turnaround in positions and postures is going to be too much to take, even by the corrupt consumer middle class that had provided solid support to the new policies to begin with. And as far as the poorer classes and the unemployed youth are concerned, the response is likely to be more than one of mere discontent and disenchantment. While on the social plane it will be increasingly confrontationist, class based or violent, on the regional plane it will strengthen separatist forces and human rights movements arising among minority, tribal and nationality groupings. Both of these can also play into the hands of fundamentalist and chauvinist tendencies.

Meanwhile, as the "new" hegemonic world order will become more and more unstable, it will compel political and professional elites in countries like ours feel even more insecure and entrapped in the global financial and commercial structure of dependency. Squeezed between internal revolt and external commitments the institutions of the state will become more and more fragile and unable to hold things together. Then only will the futility of the old order (of which the so-called "new policy package" is an integral part) dawn on those who had somehow, despite all indicators to the contrary, kept believing in the virtues of the world capitalism.

Whether the mainstream democratic process will be able to provide relevant alternatives within the established institutional order by throwing up new political formations and class alignments remains to be seen. There is quite a large constituency available both at the grassroots and at the macro and intermediate levels for this to take off but it is still a highly fragmented terrain. It (that is, the alternatives movement) faces the further task of either once again partially de-linking from the global market and other structures of world governance or transforming the latter on the basis of a new ideological and institutional framework. Unfortunately, despite a whole spate of theorising over twenty years for an alternative vision and an alternative set of institutions, even the beginnings of a new ideological consensus for the same have yet to take place. The global institutions of finance capital, its technological underpinning and political support structure *do* have an ideological consensus, and a strong confidence in spreading it across the world. That it cannot provide an enduring basis for peace and justice and hence cannot survive for long is, of course, clear. But when it all begins to shake and even seems like moving towards a crash, are we ready with a well thought out blueprint for an alternative, a political and communications strategy to make it sound both right and workable, and a policy framework for translating it into agendas of action?

The alternative to being prepared with such a blueprint for an alternative will only be widespread chaos, uncontrollable violence and growing trade and commerce in such violence. Needless to say, the worst sufferers of such a collapse of civil society will be the poor, and among the poor, the women, the children and the aged and the handicapped. Working toward an intellectual framework for an alternative is by no means a luxury. It is needed above all by the victims of history. ■

Political Economy of the Uruguay Round of Trade Negotiations–III

MUCHKUND DUBEY

This is the concluding part of the detailed article on the Uruguay Round of Trade Negotiations. The first and second parts appeared in Mainstream, *May 30, 1992 and June 6, 1992 respectively. The author, a former Foreign Secretary, is currently a Professor, South Asian Division, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.* –Editor

Because of the domination of transnational corporations in the realm of services, curbing restrictive business practices becomes very important in the context of liberalisation of trade in services. As we know, the restrictive business practices of the TNCs take the form of transfer pricing, exercise of monopoly power over sale and purchase, abuses of their superior resources power, etc.

The problem is recognised in Article IX but there is no provision by way of specific commitment to deal with the problem. The only provision is that "each party shall at the request of another party, enter into consultations with a view to eliminating restrictive business practices".

The party addressed will only "accord full and sympathetic consideration to such a request". There was in fact no need for such an inane provision. The fact is that the issues of the RBPs of the TNCs is cleverly skirted in the GATS.

What will be included in the schedule of the GATS will depend upon the outcome of the negotiations in specific sectors and sub-sectors. But there are annexes which contain guidelines and understanding for negotiations in selected service sectors. The only two service sectors in which India has some competitive advantage, that is, consultancy and construction services, are not even mentioned in the Annex. Perhaps, the Indian negotiators could not bring the developed countries to talk about the problems in these sectors. In the Annex on "movement of natural persons providing services under the Agreement". It is provided that the Agreement shall not apply to measures affecting natural persons seeking access to the employment market of a party, nor shall it apply to measures regarding citizenship, employment or residence on a permanent basis.

Thus the Indian effort to seek liberalisation of labour migration has not been successful. Movement of semi-skilled and unskilled workers for providing services through residence also appears to have been kept outside the scope of the negotiations.

D. Agriculture

In the negotiations on agriculture, the brief of the Indian delegation was to ensure that considering the special position of agriculture in our economy, we were not required to accept the same to liberalisation commitments as the developed countries and that we were able to maintain intact our policy to promote agricultural growth, provide inputs at subsidised rates to our farmers and continue our public distribution system for food.

The Text on Agriculture in the DFA does not go as far towards removing agricultural subsidies as the United States and other countries interested in liberalisation in agriculture would have liked it to go. The commitment to be undertaken according to the Text is to:

(a) reduce domestic support measured in terms of AMS (Aggregate Measurement of Support) by 20 per cent;
(b) reduce barriers to trade by 36 per cent;
(c) reduce export subsidies specified in the Text, by 36 per cent of the budget outlays and 24 per cent in quantity;
(d) if there is no import, then it will be necessary to open the market up to three per cent of total domestic consumption in the base period, going up to five per cent by the end of 1999.

These measures will have to be implemented between 1933 and 1999.

The following are the special dispensations for the developing countries:

(a) Their commitment to liberalise will be only two-thirds of that undertaken by the developed countries. This will mean they will be required to reduce domestic support by 13 per cent; export subsidies by 24 per cent of outlay and 16 per cent in quantity and customs tariffs and other barriers after tariffication by 24 per cent.

(b) For them, the period of implementation will be 10 years as against seven years for the developed countries.

(c) They will not be required to reduce domestic support as long as it does not exceed 10 per cent of the total value of production of a basic agricultural product. This threshold percentage for developed countries is five (Article 6(4)).

(d) The following item will be excluded for them from the list of domestic support measures subject to reduction:
  (i) Investment subsidies generally available to agriculture in developing countries;
  (ii) Agricultural import subsidies generally available to low income or resource poor producers in developing countries. (Article 6(2))

(e) They can continue the following export subsidies which are included in the list of export subsidies subject to reduction:
  (i) Subsidies to reduce the cost of marketing export of agricultural products including handling, upgrading, other processing costs and the costs of international transport and freight.
  (ii) Internal transport and freight charges on export shipments provided or mandated by the government, on terms more favourable than for domestic shipment.

The following are the implications of these measures for India:

(a) For the first time we have agreed to take the first steps towards integrating our agriculture with the agricultural regimes of advanced countries. Its implications which can be really far-reaching, do not seem to have been analysed fully. There is a commitment to keep five per cent of domestic consumption of agricultural products open for imports from abroad.

(b) We did not succeed in our effort not to accept any commitment to reduce domestic support and export subsidies. We will have to reduce by 13 per cent all domestic support measures listed in the Text except the two for which exceptions have been made. Similarly, we will have to reduce all export subsidies listed in the list except the two which developing countries can maintain without any reduction.

(c) It will not be possible to continue agricultural input subsidies which are meant for all farmers and not necessarily targetted at low-income and resource-poor producers Thus availability of fertilisers, water, power and diesel to farmers in general at subsidised rates will no longer be possible.

(d) Subsidies for providing food aid to the needy section of the population will be exempted from the commitment to reduce domestic support. But this will be possible only if clearly defined criteria related to nutritional objectives will be fulfilled. This will affect our public distribution system. This will be subjected to international scrutiny in order to ensure that (a) it caters to the requirement of those who are needy (b) that in doing so it fulfills clearly defined criteria related to nutritional objective and (c) that the government purchases are at current market prices and not at prices fixed by the government.

It is unlikely that our agricultural exports will become competitive with the implementation of the Text on Agriculture. The reductions in domestic and export subsidies as well as in import restrictions stipulated in the Text are not more than 30 per cent on an average. This means that 70 per cent of the present subsidies will still remain intact, making it still difficult for us to compete with the subsidised prices of the developed countries. Besides, for a number of exportable agricultural products, India is not one of the low-cost producers.

III

IN the above section, we have analysed the implications of the Text of the DFA relating to those areas where our goal was damage limitation. It has been demonstrated that we have singularly failed in achieving this objective and that our interests in these areas are going to be grievously harmed with the implementation of the relevant texts in the DFA. In this section we are going to analyse the implications of the DFA Text relating to one area in which we were in the position of demandeurs and hence we expected to gain through these negotiations. This area is Textiles and Clothing.

Textiles and Clothing

The ostensible achievement in the Text on Textiles and Clothing is that it has been agreed to integrate the Multi-Fibre Agreement (MFA) into the GATT by phasing out the MFA during the 10-year period 1993-2002. However, the phasing out proposed is such as to permit only marginal liberalisation until the end of 1996, only some liberalisation until the end of 2000 and expect to achieve almost 50 per cent liberalisation at one stroke at the end of the stipulated period for integration, that is, the year 2002.

Sixteen per cent of the trade in textiles covered under the MFA will be liberalised in 1993. This may involve no liberalisation at all for India because in any case the global imports of textiles not covered by restraint in the Indo-US bilateral agreement is 25 per cent. It is 27 per cent in the agreement with the EC. Both the USA and the EC are likely to claim credit for the imports not covered by restraint and thus introduce no liberalisation at all.

An additional 17 per cent of the trade in textiles covered under the MFA will be liberalised in 1996 so that the cumulative liberalisation at the end of 1996 will be 33 per cent. If the USA and the EC decide to take credit for imports from India not covered by restraint, the liberalisation that they need to introduce at the end of 1996 will be only eight per cent and six per cent respectively of the imports under restraint.

By the same token, nominal cumulative liberalisation at the end of 2000 should be 51 per cent but the real liberalisation that need be introduced will be only 26 per cent and 24 per cent respectively.

Thus the USA and the EC will have to liberalise 74 per cent and 76 per cent of the imports currently under restraint at one stroke in 2003. This sounds incredible. Going by the experience of the Short-term Textiles Agreement (STA) and the Long-term Textile Agreement (LTA), it may very well happen that this large dose of liberalisation may not be acceptable in 2003 and the MFA may be continued under some excuse or the other.

The results of the negotiations on Textiles are disappointing for the developing countries. They cannot expect more than marginal improvement in the access to the markets of developed countries, of their textile exports until the year 2000. This is hardly calculated to inspire confidence about the integration of the MFA with the GATT.

IV

Multilateral Trade Organisation

The proposed Multilateral Trade Organisation (MTO) will have far-reaching implications for the developing countries and for the structure and character of international economic and trade relations.

According to the text of the Agreement establishing the MTO, contained in the DFA, the MTO will be "GATT plus" in that it will "encompass the GATT as modified, all Agreements and arrangements concluded under its auspices and the complete results of the Uruguay Round multilateral trade negotiations." The GATT members will automatically be entitled to become members of the MTO. Very soon after the launching of the MTO, the GATT will cease to have its *raison d'etre*, as it will be realised that a fully modernised and revamped GATT already constituted an integral part of the MTO. Instead of invoking Articles XXII and XXIII of GATT, members of the MTO would take recourse to the new Dispute Settlement Mechanism administered by the MTO.

In due course, all major trading countries will complete the formality by withdrawing from the GATT after giving 60 days notice according to the Protocol of Provisional Application. Any country which decides not to join the MTO will in due course lose its rights under the GATT because, the GATT itself will disappear. This means that not joining the MTO will amount to remaining outside the multilateral trading system.

The MTO will administer the Integrated Dispute Settlement System (IDSS) the text of which is also included in the DFA. Among others, the IDSS will permit cross-retaliation. The relevant clause in the text on IDSS provides that "the general principle is that the complaining party should first seek to suspend concessions or other obligations in the same sector as that in which the Panel or Appellate body has found a violation or other nullification or impairment".

However, shift in retaliation in other sector or sectors is permissible if the sanctions within the same sector are not "practical or effective". This offers sufficient flexibility for cross-retaliation. In fact when it concerns retaliation against non-compliance with liberalisation obligation in services, by withdrawing or suspending concessions in trade in goods, the flexibility provided in the text can be deemed to be almost *a priori* exhausted.

Since concessions given in the field of services by the developed countries will have very limited operational significance for developing countries because of their inability to compete, the developed countries instead of going through the formality of suspending concessions in the field of services, will proceed directly to suspend concessions in the field of goods.

Through its provision of cross-retaliation, the MTO will legalise and multilateralise Section 301 of the US Trade and Competitiveness Act. Given the cross-retaliation provision of the MTO, there will simply be no need for 301 unless, of course, it is amended to include retaliation in economic fields other than trade and in non-economic fields.

It is futile to entertain the hope that the developing countries like India can also use the cross-retaliation provision. Because of the low level of their economic growth, their need to import from the developed countries in order to carry out their development projects and programmes and their weak bargaining position, the developing countries were seldom able to retaliate under Article XXIII of the GATT. It is indeed wishful thinking to believe that they will now be able to retaliate simply because trade in services has been brought into the picture and that there is now more than one area of retaliation.

The MTO will also administer the Trade Policy Review Mechanism (TPRM) which will be established according to the Draft Decision under the Functioning of the GATT System (FOGS) included in the DFA. Under the TPRM, both individual country reviews as well as an annual review of developments in international trading environment will be undertaken. The IMF and World Bank will be closely associated with these reviews.

It is stated in the Text of the FOGS:

> The GATT should, therefore, pursue and develop its cooperation with the international organisations responsible for monetary and financial matters while... avoiding the imposition on government of cross-conditionality or additional conditions." In forging such cooperation with the IMF and World Bank, it is not certain that imposition of cross-conditionality would be avoided. Whatever the intention or objective articulated in the text, the very fact that the IMF and World Bank will be associated with the regular periodic reviews of the trade policies of individual member-countries, will keep the prospect of cross-conditionality hanging over the heads of the vulnerable countries, like the Damocles' Sword. In order fully to institutionalise the trilateral cooperation between the GATT, the IMF and World Bank, the Director-General of the GATT is going "to review, with the Managing Director of the IMF and the President of the World Bank, the implications of the GATT's future responsibilities for its cooperation with the Brettonwoods institutions, as well as the forms such cooperation might take, with a view to achieving greater coherence in *global economic policy-making*".

◆

ONE may ask: Why this emphasis on cooperation with only the IMF and World Bank and not the UNCTAD, UNIDO, ECOSOC and the Second Committee of the UN General Assembly? What is the global economic policy that is going to be fashioned? Who will play the decisive role in this 'global economic policy-making'? Whose interest is this global economic policy going to serve? On whom is it going to be imposed?

There is no doubt that the role and significance of the UNCTAD and the WIPO—the two organisations with which the GATTshould be most closely associated—will be considerably eroded with the establishment of the MTO. In a sense one of the purposes of the Uruguay Round of Negotiations and the very purpose of the MTO is to bypass the WIPO and the UNCTAD. The WIPO was bypassed because the Paris Convention that it was administering did not prescribe as high norms and standards for the IPR protection as now prevalent in the developed countries. Besides, the WIPO functioned on the basis of sovereign equality of states and had no mechanism to enforce compliance on behalf of the developed countries except through reconciliation and arbitration. This has now been achieved by the device of cross-retaliation built into the MTO. Thus the basic purpose of bypassing the WIPO has been served.

The UNCTAD has emerged from the Eighth Conference, for example, emasculated and as a pale shadow of what it was conceived to be at the time of its establishment in 1964 and what it was till recently. It will be too much to say that this is the direct result of the Uruguay Round or was inevitable following the decision to establish the MTO. The erosion of the role of the UNCTAD has been an autonomous process influenced by a variety of political and economic factors operating at the international level. But there is certainly a link between whittling down the role of the more democratic and universal bodies like the UNCTAD, ECOSOC and the General Assembly, the strengthening of the role of bodies like the IMF and World Bank where decisions are taken on the basis of weighted voting, the building of the device of cross-retaliation in the GATT and the establishment of the MTO. It could even be argued that all these are a part of a grand design to perpetuate the stranglehold of the existing major economic powers over the multilateral economic and trading system.

The MTO has not been equipped with the authority to play the concommitant role to facilitate the transfer of resources and technology to the developing countries for building and upgrading the competitiveness of service industries. Nor has it been able to impose any commitment on the developed countries to curb the restrictive business practices of their TNCs. This should really have been done by the UNCTAD and UNIDO. But now with the establishment of the MTO and progressive erosion of the role and authority of these bodies, the responsibility for transfer of resources and technology will be left to the IMF and World Bank, and nobody will dare the TNCs to curb their restrictive business practices.

The MTO is all embracing. It will, among others, administer all the Agreements and Arrangements listed in Annex I of the Text on the MTO. This includes the revamped GATT, all instruments administered by the GATT and as elaborated in the Uruguay Round, the GATT and the Agreement on TRIPS. This is practically all inclusive. Not signing the MTO will amount to staying out of the multilateral trading system. No reservations are permitted to any of the Agreements/Arrangements/Draft Decisions, etc. included in Annex I. They are all offered on a take-it-or-leave-it basis.

In a sense, the MTO is a violation of the decision taken at Punta del Este to keep the negotiations on goods and services in two separate tracks and take a decision on international implementation of the results of the negotiations at a meeting of Ministers to be held on the occasion of a Special Session of the Contracting Parties. The developing countries agreed to their arrangement in order to keep the issue of cross-retaliation pending till the very end and to get a decision on this issue taken only at a meeting of Ministers. One of the presumptions was that the Minister could very well decide to make separate institutional arrangement for administering the Agreement on Services, thus avoiding cross-retaliation. The text on the MTO pre-empts that decision by already providing for a single institutional arrangement to administer all the agreements and also providing for cross-retaliation within the framework of this institutional arrangement.

It may be argued that the MTO Text is merely a draft presented to the participants in the negotiations and that a meeting of Ministers is still stipulated to take place to decide on the international implementation of the results (paragraph 3 of the Draft Final Act). However, this is merely a formality. Decision at the meeting of the Ministers is clearly pre-empted by the proposed text on the MTO.

An important aspect of the institutional arrangement suggested in the Text on FOGS is the elaborate procedure of notification established under the arrangement. A Central Registry of Notifications is going to be established in the GATT (and later in the MTO) Secretariat. This would develop into an instrument of continuing surveillance of trade and other economic policies of member-countries.

V

THE Government of India has been justifying, even though implicitly, our acceding to the Single Treaty, basically for two reasons. Firstly, it is stated that keeping out of the Draft Final Treaty would amount to staying out of the international trading system. It is stated that this is a situation we cannot afford to be in. For, if we remain outside the Treaty, we will lose our rights and obligations in respect of trade in goods. We will no longer be able to utilise the GATT dispute settlement mechanism. We would lose our MFN privilege in our traditional markets. We will be obliged to renegotiate these rights and privileges bilaterally with each country. We will be going to these bilateral negotiations with the same weak bargaining position as we have had in multilateral negotiations. In the bilateral negotiations, we will be required to make the same concessions as are now coming in the way of our acceding to the Draft Final Act.

Our developed country trade partners may use the bilateral negotiations not only to force us to concede what we are refusing to do in the Uruguay Round, but also to pressurise us to make concessions on non-economic issues like nuclear non-proliferation, reduction in arms expenditure, Kashmir, human rights, etc.

The issues raised above are valid and need to be answered. It is not really difficult to find answers. After all, a moment comes in every nation's life when it has to judge what sacrifices it is prepared to make to safeguard its national interest, its sovereignty and its dignity. There may very well be occasions when it may be imperative to make all the sacrifices necessary to safeguard our interest and independence of action and judgement. Besides, India will never go to a bilateral negotiation naked. It will always have, by virtue of its size, population, strategic location, highly skilled pool of manpower and its industrial and technological base, some bargaining counters in any negotiation.

Other countries also have interest in India just as we have interests in them. And finally if the only way in which we can pursue a development strategy suited to our needs is by withdrawing ourselves from the world economic and trading system, we need not rule out such a possibility either.

And even if we keep out of the multilateral trading system, it will not be a free liberal trading system we would be keeping out of. The multilateral trading system that we will be staying away from, will be a system tailored to serve the interest of industrialised countries. After all, what is liberal about propitiating the monopoly interest of the industrialised countries by prescribing higher norms and standards for IPR protection under the threat of cross-retaliation? What is liberal about cleverly skirting the issue of restrictive business practices? What is liberal about keeping the restraint on the import of textiles more or less intact till the end of the century?

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IN any case, we are still at the negotiating stage now. Therefore, the question of withdrawing ourselves from the multilateral trading system does not arise at this stage. Our effort should be to identify the minimum must which we would like to be renegotiated, demand renegotiations on these points and mobilise the support of other like-minded countries, including the developing countries, in the process of the renegotiation.

It is indeed tragic that in spite of such a demand voiced in the Indian Parliament and by a large section of public opinion in the country, the government has not so far stated publicly as to what are the basic minimum number of issues which it would like to be renegotiated. Nor has the government given any indication to the public and Parliament that a set of issues of crucial importance to India have in fact been taken up for renegotiation or at least they have been raised with the GATT Secretariat and the major developed countries.

This mystifying reticence and inaction of the Government of India stands in sharp contrast to the stand taken by other major negotiating partners. For example, a senior official of the Japanese Government said in Tokyo on February 20 that Japan had requested an urgent meeting to modify the DFA in order to retain import control on agricultural products. Japan also said that it was opposed to the tariffication system. (*Economic Times*, February 21, 1992.)

In January, the EC Trade and Farm Ministers agreed that the DFA was a "reference document for the final phase of the negotiations" and that "insofar as the Dunkel paper calls into question the foundations of the Community's agricultural policy, it is not acceptable and, therefore, has to be modified". (*Economic Times*, February 21, 1992)

The United States has also indicated that it would like some of the issues of interest to it to be renegotiated. In this connection reference has been made to the Transition Period permitted to developing countries to implement the TRIPs Text, which the United States considers too long.

It is not clear in this context why the Government of India has been keeping silent for more than four months since the Dunkel Draft has been debated in the country.

The other reason advanced by the Government of India, for our acceding to the Single Treaty and not asking for renegotiation is that if we oppose the Treaty, we would be the only country opposing it. In other words, the treaty is acceptable to all and by opposing it we will get totally isolated.

If this is indeed true then one may legitimately ask as to how this isolation has come about. The fact is that we got isolated because we decided not to take the lead. This spectre of isolation has been deliberately created as a self-fulfilling prophecy. The fear of isolation has been a rationalisation for a deliberately supine policy. Right from the time of the launching of the negotiations, we have been afraid of mobilising the support of other developing countries. We took to heart the US indignation at seeing India engaged in any act of ganging up against the United States. Proposals for convening in Delhi a meeting of the Trade Ministers of selected developing countries were repeatedly vetoed at the political level.

The last opportunity of our taking the initiative to convene such a meeting was in Montreal at the Ministerial Meeting for the mid-term review of the Uruguay Round in December 1988. But this opportunity was also spurned for fear of being seen as ganging up against the United States. This was in spite of the fact that such meetings were held regularly in Punta del Este where the Uruguay Round was launched. It was also our experience until April 1989, the date of our total surrender on TRIPs, that whenever India took the lead, other developing countries were quick to come on board. There was a feeling at least among some delegates and observers at the time of the Geneva meeting in April 1989 that many developing countries expected India to take a lead and they felt helpless when India too surrendered.

It is possible that because of the recent world situation and the extreme vulnerability of the developing countries, we would have had the same outcome as in the DFA in spite of all the efforts that we could have made. But this is an approach of cynical abdication of diplomacy, if not, as already pointed out, a self-fulfilling prophecy.

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THE Draft Final Act has been presented on a take-it-or-leave-it basis as a single treaty to be accepted in toto without making reservations on any part of the Treaty. Paragraph 5 of the Text of the DFA states that "the instruments shall be open for acceptance as a whole...."

There is a difference between the procedure for accession to the Final Act and its constituent parts and the exact status of the Draft Final Act. The fact is that the Final Act presented by Dunkel is still a draft and hence subject to negotiation and amendments. This is borne out by the fact that some countries have asked for the renegotiation on parts of the document.

Even the proposition of accepting the documents *in toto* and not being able to keep away from one without staying away from all, is still in the nature of a suggestion. It is for member-countries to accept or reject this suggestion. We should not accept this suggestion because it is both unreasonable and extraordinary. What the participating countries have been presented with is not really a single treaty but a treaty of treaties. This is unprecedented in the history of international law. Each of these treaties fundamentally affects the economic and trading interests of the countries participating in the negotiations. These treaties together are going to regulate a whole gamut of international economic relations. They are going to govern mostly fundamental aspects of these relations.

It is, therefore, unreasonable to accept all member-countries to accede to all these treaties without reservations. This was not done at the conclusion of

(Continued on page 24)

Modernisation and Social Justice

ARUN GHOSH

The book is a collection of ten essays, written by Dr. Kurien between March 1983 and January 1989, and re-arranged under three topics: one defining the problem of growth and justice; the second reviewing India's economic growth performance; and the third, a theoretical foray into the nature of the market process and marketisation and the role of the state therein. There is also a brief introduction for each of the three sections, written in 1991, without any substantial modification of the earlier pieces (except to add a few footnotes here and there).

One had, of course, read *some* of the pieces earlier, as and when they had appeared, though the present writer has to regretfully confess that some of the articles had not been seen by him earlier. To read all the articles together is not only a treat, it is an education even for an old hand who has dealt with the subject somewhat extensively. In fact, if one were asked to assess the volume, one would have to briefly say that Dr. Kurien's book is of seminal importance not only at the present juncture but in the literature on development economics.

Growth and Justice: Aspects of India's Development Experience by C.T. Kurien, Oxford University Press, 1992; pp. 295; Price: Rs 275.

Admittedly, being a collection of essays written (or lectures delivered) over a period of time, there are occasional repetitions of the same idea, or of the same points. But these points need to be reiterated; they need to sink into the consciousness of all students and professors of development economics. There is need for a reminder today, not only to theoreticians but also to policy-makers that the distribution of *ownership of resources* in a community plays a crucial role in determining the *pattern of development* that the community is likely to attain, no matter what homilies are paid to goals such as the attainment of a "socialistic pattern of society".

The book is also prophetic. For example, an article written as far back as March 1983, entitled "Indian Society: Past Trends and Future Prospects", chalks out the likely developments in the Indian economy during the eighties in vivid detail, every single one of the forecasts then made having come out correctly, not only in the matter of the pattern of internal development but also in the matter of external developments and the balance-of-payments problems that we face today. Some of us could foresee these problems from 1987, and some others from 1988, but to foresee the present developments in early 1983 speaks volumes of Dr. Kurien's prescience and understanding of economic processes and their inevitable denouement.

The first section seeks to focus on the diagnosis of a major socio-economic problem. To put it in Dr. Kurien's words: "Why is it that when economies grow, the benefits go to a few and the many are left practically untouched?" Despite the pronounced official endeavour in India to attain "a socialistic pattern of society"; despite successive Plan programmes emphasising the need for distributive justice and egalitarian growth; despite the Chapter IV of the Indian Constitution laying down, in the Directive Principles of State Policy, a charter for the welfare of all the people of this country, the number and percentage of people below the poverty line has remained abysmal. Even as late as in the eighties, the Sixth Plan (1980-85) was forced to reiterate that "public policies will have to acquire a sharper redistribution focus in raising the share of the poorer sections in national income, consumption and in the utilisation of public services". And yet, as per the National Sample Survey, as late as 1987-88, fully 43 per cent of the Indian population—45 per cent in the rural areas and 39 per cent in the urban area—was below the poverty line. (See B.S. Minhas, L.R. Jain and S.D. Tendulkar: *Economic and Political Weekly*, Bombay; July 6-13, 1991.)

As Dr. Kurien points out, the problem is a global one; he cites a report prepared under the aegis of the World Bank (*vide*, Hollis Chenery: *Redistribution with Growth*, Oxford, OUP, 1974) to indicate "that more than a decade of growth in underdeveloped countries has been of little or no benefit to perhaps a third of their population". At the sub-continental level, Dr. Kurien digs back into history and finds for Bangladesh that "from the 1830s to the late 1930s....

wage rates for agricultural workers in rice units ranged between five and six kilograms. Around 1950 it was three kilograms. In the 1970s it fell below two-and-a-half kilograms" (*vide* A.R. Khan, "Real Wages of Agricultural Workers in Bangladesh", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Bombay, January 28, 1984). A similar development is found by S. Guhan and J.P. Mencher, in the village Iruvelpattu in South Arcot district of Tamil Nadu, where village studies had been conducted in 1916, in 1937, in 1961 and again in1981 (*vide*, *EPW*, June 4 and 11, 1983), where the benefits of development and of modern cultivation techniques accrue entirely to the big landlord of the village. It is not as if Iruvelpattu can be stated to have been denied "growth"; situated only 12 kilometres away from the market town of Villupuram, and now served by an all-weather road, the village has tractors, trucks, a car, electricity, a Primary Health Centre, a primary school (which existed even in 1937). In 1937, only three of the 32 wells in the village were used for irrigation; in 1981, there were 78 wells in private ownership, of which 65 were equipped with electric pumpsets and 13 with oil engines. Consequently, paddy cultivation has been extended to 87 per cent of the cultivated area, and millet growing is down from 10 per cent to two per cent of the cropped area.

As a result of the use of high-yielding seed varieties, and the use of fertilisers and water, paddy output has increased from 1110 kilograms per acre to 2330 kilograms. And yet, in 1981, Guhan and Menscher report: "To hover just above the poverty line, a rural household would need to generate an annual income of Rs 2738. But in Iruvelpattu, the ***highest*** annual earnings by an agricultural labouring household was only Rs 1645; the *average* figure was just Rs 1350 or less than half of the required minimum.....altogether, some 200 agricultural labour and marginal cultivator households, or 62 per cent of the total number of 323 households in Iruvelpattu, can be considered to be absolutely poor."

If such a long quotation has been given from just one isolated village study—pertaining to a village which has benefited from many of the developments ushered in by the Plan programme—it is because the scenario gets repeated in most areas of the country, where economic development has led to the enrichment of a few and to the impoverishment of the many. The study by Minhas *et al.*, which indicates that 45 per cent of the rural population in India in 1987-88 was below the poverty line gives the all-India average. When one goes into details, the percentage goes up significantly in many of the regions.

It is this maldistribution of the benefits of development which should alert us to the wrong direction in which our development effort has taken the country, and the roots of the problem by way of ownership of resources: land and access to water in the rural areas. As far back as 1964, the Committee on Distribution of Income and Levels of Living, headed by P.C. Mahalanobis—himself the architect of the Second Five Year Plan which laid down the pattern of development to be pursued in India—concluded: "Despite all the countervailing measures taken.... concentration of economic power in the private sector is more than what could be justified as necessary on functional groups, and as it exists both in generalised and in specific forms." Later, in 1969, the Industrial Licensing Policy Inquiry Committee (or the Dutt Committee as it has come to be known) stated, in respect of the industrial sector, that the very system of licensing, and of institutional funding of private sector projects, had led to the "pre-emption" of capacity by a few Large Houses, and had led to the appropriation of the bulk of institutional finance available, by these Large Houses, leading yet again to "increased concentration" of economic power in a few hands, and to lopsided growth.

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THE findings of the Dutt Committee relate essentially to the industrial economy. As Dr. Kurien has found, the process has been essentially similar, and in many ways more extensive, in the rural areas. With the introduction of the new agricultural strategy—the Green Revolution—in the mid-sixties, the benefits of growth have accrued "primarily, if not exclusively, to the larger and richer farmers". Even in the prosperous and agriculturally advanced State of Punjab, G.S. Bhalla and C.K. Chadha have found that about a third of the marginal farmers (tilling between 2.5 and 5.0 acres of land) "are living below the poverty line....Their production efficiency notwithstanding, these farmers are unable to earn adequate per capita income from crop production because of their small land base". (*vide*, G.S. Bhalla and C.K. Chadha, "Green Revolution and the Small Peasant: A Study of Income Distribution in Punjab Agriculture"; *EPW*, May 15 and May 22, 1982). If this is the situation of land-holdings between 2.5 and 5.0 acres in Punjab, with the present distribution of landholdings in the rest of the country, one can easily see how the process of change has adversely affected large masses of the rural population.

Dr. Kurien has a very specific answer to the problem. The distribution of the benefits of development accrue essentially in proportion to the *command over resources* that different sections of the population have *ab initio*. Where the only resource is labour power, the owner has no bargaining capacity; even with a small holding of less than one hectare—which is what the vast majority of the cultivating farmers now own—the farming population is not able to invest adequately in agriculture; more particularly, he usually lacks access to irrigation water and therefore parts with a large part of his produce (or income) to buy water; and his life hovers precariously below the subsistence level. This is the fate of both landless labourers and marginal farmers.

The traditional access to village commons, to grazing land, to other community owned facilities, has also been denied to a majority of the villagers, with steady growth of the market system.

It is in this context that Dr. Kurien's foray into the theory of the market, of the implications of "marketisation" of the economy—in a situation of highly skewed distribution of the ownership of resources—becomes extremely pertinent.

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THERE are few works in economic literature on the *evolution* of the market, John Hicks' being one of them, but Hicks emphasises only the congruence aspect of the market, not its conflict aspect. Arrow and Hahn have emphasised, as have Amartya Sen and quite a few others, the limitations of the market system. After analysing the available literature on the subject, Dr. Kurien gets on to the fundamental issue of the "economic power balance of different individuals and groups" (mentioned by Amartya Sen), and the question of "social conditions and market functioning". Dr. Kurien points out that "the subjective freedom of choice that the market economy purports to offer is....heavily circumscribed by the objective conditions underlying distribution of economic power....the logic of the system dictates that the goods actually produced and made available for exchange are determined by the exercise of the economic power that arises from the initial situation".

Dr. Kurien's brief analysis of the theoretical foundations of the theory of the market is a classic in itself, and deserves wide publicity and discussion. He has demonstrated that the state and the market are not two independent entities, that the latter cannot exist without the former, that there are some rules of the game that must be followed for the functioning of the market system; that the rules of the game are not just "competition" as the neo-classical economists have made out but are related to a variety of other issues (quite apart from the information system and effective communication between the buyers and sellers) including, sovereignty, the exercise of power, "representation"—which do not appear to be directly connected with the market—which shape the broad patterning of economic forces which ultimately shape the market, which in turn has a profound impact on economic processes.

Amartya Sen has, of course, dealt with the issue from a somewhat different angle; apart from "self-interest", he has cited "sympathy" and "commitment" as two of the motivating factors that negate the process of market-determined choices. However, as Dr. Kurien points out, "in any social situation there exists the possibility both of congruence and of conflict; the analysis of market mechanisms, however, confine attention to the former, to the total exclusion of the latter". Dr. Kurien relates market functioning to the basic question of social conditions, which in turn depends on the underlying distribution of economic power in a society.

Dr. Kurien has neatly punctured the neo-classicist view of the market. "It is an illusion", he states, "to imagine that, beyond the simplest of cases, economic activity can take place without money"; and it is this factor, and the influence of money—of capital accumulation through appropriation of the surplus—which negates some of the assumptions regarding the *neutrality* of the market system as between different economic agents.

Even neo-classical economists recognise the importance of 'externalities' and of 'indivisibilities'—and, therefore, of social cost-benefit criteria—as superceding individual interests and preferences, as emerging from the market. But the major flaw in the current theory of the market is the assumption of a liberal (democratic) state upholding the rules of the game in regard to the free functioning of the market. Unfortunately, even in the Bentham-Mill ideal of a liberal state, there exist (as Marx and Engels had pointed out) two "factors which constitute the fabric of society and of social relationships: material forces that underlie the division of labour and the class division of society, and interests related to matters of flesh and blood". Market transactions also reflect—in the same manner as the division of labour—"initial endowments" by way of property rights and ownership of resources, of a "bundle of claims" (in primitive Communist societies, associated with a bundle of obligations, which are gradually replaced by the marketisation process); as well as the need for state intervention which is never truly neutral but reflects in itself a power equation derived from its social base. As Dr. Kurien has succinctly pointed out, "markets evolve and function within definite socio-economic structures and relationships".

It is not possible to do justice to Dr. Kurien's book in a brief review; in fact, each of his articles deserves a separate review; each is full of insight and has a strong analytical base. What is remarkable about this collection of essays is the unifying logical strand that permeates all the essays, be they on the very concept of development, or the working of the development experience in India, or purely theoretical issues concerning some of the basic assumptions of neo-classical economics, especially in regard to the nature and evolution of the "market", the characteristics of a "liberal" (democratic) state as outlined by Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, and the close nexus between the market and the state and, therefore, of the roots of power within each state.

This collection of ten essays by Dr. Kurien is essential reading not only for all students of development economics but also for all those who are concerned with the evolution of India from a traditional to a modern society, so that, in our hurry to modernise, we do not obliterate the society we are endeavouring to modernise. ■

MUCHKUND DUBEY: Uruguay Round

(Continued from page 20)

the Tokyo Round when the areas covered by the negotiations were very limited as compared to the vast scope of the Uruguay Round. The governments were free to accede to or opt out of the particular code or codes negotiated during the Tokyo Round.

The argument that if all the countries do not accede to all the treaties included in the DFA, the balance of gains and losses achieved during the negotiations will be disturbed is invalid and, in any case, highly exaggerated. How can we talk about balance in an intrinsically unbalanced package? There can be no balance for the developing countries so long as the questions of transfer of resources and technology and broad developmental aspects are not brought in.

Perhaps the government is hoping that it will get off the hook because of the controversy on agriculture raging between the United States and the EC—a controversy which has thrown the Uruguay Round in a state of suspended animation for more than four months now. It is believed in some quarters that if this controversy is not resolved very soon, developed countries will lose interest in the Uruguay Round and the whole exercise will fall by the wayside. Preoccuaption of major negotiating partners with their domestic political problems such as the forthcoming US Presidential elections, is cited as additional factors detracting attention from the Uruguay Round and leading to the sidelining if not aborting the entire process of the negotiations.

This expectation of the inevitable derailment of the Uruguay Round is going to turn out to be wishful thinking. On all the issues, such as the TRIPs, TRIMs, Services, and the MTO on which the major industrialised countries had common interest, they have got in the Dunkel Draft, texts which almost fully meet their requirements. The purpose for which they jointly and assiduously worked for these texts over a period of nearly a decade, still remains valid. They are not, therefore, going to wilfully jettison these gains.

The world in which the Uruguay Round is going to be concluded is very different from that in which it was launched. With the collapse of the Soviet system and the decisive, almost surgical, victory of the United States and its allies in the Gulf war, these countries have acquired greater confidence and are displaying greater arrogance of power. They are now out to establish a "new world order" which will be the best framework of safeguarding their interest and over which they would have complete hegemony.

The results of the Uruguay Round as contained in the Dunkel Draft is going to prove an invaluable instrument for maintaining and strengthening their hold over the global economic power structure. They will use this instrument alongwith the others they have devised recently to achieve the same purpose. These include disarmament conditionalities for providing aid and trade concessions, human rights conditionalities, forcing non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, creation and maintenance of ad hoc discriminatory regimes for controlling the transfer for dual-purpose technology, equipment and material and intervention in the domestic affairs of the developing countries on humanitarian grounds.

In this context, the gains of the Uruguay Round are unlikely to be squandered away by these countries. The most that can happen is for them to keep these gains up their sleeve until they resolve their *inter se* differences on agriculture, and to legalise and institutionalise these gains immediately thereafter. Even if they decide to wait till the end of the US elections, the deluge will be deferred for the developing countries only until February/March 1993 which is, after all, not that far away. (Concluded) ■

Exploring Anti-Mandal Suicides

DINESH MOHAN

On March 11, 1987, four teenagers, two boys two girls, from a suburban New Jersey, USA community committed suicide by locking themselves inside a 13-car garage and sitting in a car with a running engine. Both males had been friends of an 18-year old youth who had died after falling from a cliff six months earlier.

Within days of these suicides, the community responded with a number of efforts, coordinated mainly by the municipal government, to prevent other suicides. School officials identified students they thought might be at high risk and provided counsellors for these students. A local suicide hotline was started and a walk-in suicide prevention and counselling centre was opened and operated 24 hours a day. The local police also assisted in locating anyone reported to have threatened suicide or who was thought to be at imminent risk of suicide. The garage where the suicides occurred was locked and 'put' under periodic police surveillance.[1]

Despite these measures, a 20-year-old female and a 17-year-old male attempted suicide together by the same means six days later in the same community.

The New Jersey community responded with so many coordinated measures to prevent further suicides because it is known that once a dramatic suicide is publicised, other vulnerable individuals in the community are likely to indulge in *imitative* suicides which spread by *contagion*. According to Madelyn S. Gould, "suicide *contagion* is the process by which one suicide facilitates the occurrence of a subsequent suicide. Contagion assumes either direct or indirect awareness of the prior suicide. *Imitation*, the process by which one suicide becomes a compelling model for successive suicides, is one underlying theory to explain the occurrence of contagion.[2] The New Jersey experience shows how difficult it is to control imitative suicides even under the best of circumstances.

Though these facts have been known for a long time the press and the social science community in India are either ignorant of these findings or they choose to ignore them. Otherwise, one cannot explain their behaviour in response to self-immolations as a part of the anti-Mandal agitations in 1990. In an amazing show of ignorance, callousness and even political opportunism the press gave maximum publicity to the suicides and attempted suicides following anti-Mandal agitations and glorified these acts. The community and political leaders behaved similarly: they either publicised the suicides to score points against the leadership of the then ruling party or they made appeals to young people to use means other than suicide to fight for their "just cause". These appeals also directly or indirectly portrayed the victims as martyrs. This is precisely what should *not* have been done.

Dr Mohan teaches at the Centre for Biomedical Engineering, Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi.

The idea that publicity of suicides can encourage more suicides is not a new one. As far back as 1845 the founder editor of the *American Journal of Insanity* claimed: "No fact is better established in science than that suicide is often committed from imitation. Some particulars of the act, or expressions, seize the imagination, and the disposition to repeat it, in a moment of morbid excitement, proves irresistible.[3]

Fifty years later, in 1894 the *New York Times* charged that the *New York World* had precipitated an unprecedented number of suicides by publishing an article on the relationship of suicide to sin. The controversy has continued ever since. The American Academy of Medicine devoted a section of its annual meeting in 1911 to this matter and the participants labelled the press as "incendiary literature", "vile and pernicious", and "an accomplice in crimes against the person" for publicising suicide cases and associated details.[4] Even the National Association of Retail Druggists protested newspaper accounts giving details of poisons used in suicides because they were "inducing morbid people and criminals to use these poisons".[5] In England, the British Medical Association moved in 1948 to prohibit press reports of inquests in cases of suicide, observing that the publicity might lead to imitative suicides.[6] Summarising this experience, Louis Dublin wrote in 1963 that "if the press would refrain from exploiting suicide by disclosing all the gruesome details and would publish only a casual death notice, a very definite reform would be achieved".[7]

Since then much more rigorous work has been done in the area of *copy-cat* or *imitative* suicides and the phenomenon of suicide *clusters*. Though there are few dissenters who would not like to blame the press, the majority of researchers agree that the phenomenon of *imitation* does exist.

Dr. Philips and Carstensen of the University of

California at San Diego examined the relation between 38 nationally televised news or feature stories about suicide from 1973-1979 in the USA and the fluctuation of the rate of suicide among teenagers before and after these stories. They found that "the national rate of suicide among teenagers rises significantly just after television news or feature stories about suicide".[8] Dr. Gould of the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons has even studied the impact of suicide in television movies and concludes that "evidence from the present study suggests that television broadcasts of fictional stories featuring suicidal behaviour may in some cases lead to imitative suicidal behaviour among teenagers".[9]

Though there are contending theories regarding the details of factors involved in imitation suicides some general points can be made based on the work done by Madelyn S. Gould and David P. Philips.[2,8-10]

Media Influence

(1) Television or news stories about suicide trigger additional suicides by teenagers.

(2) The more highly publicised the suicide the greater the number of imitative suicides.

(3) Prominent newspaper coverage of a suicide has the effect of increasing suicide behaviour within the readership area of the newspaper.

(4) The magnitude of increase in suicides after media publicity is also related to the "attractiveness" of the individual whose death is being reported.

(5) Wide publicity of suicides may produce a familiarity and acceptance of the *idea* of suicide by removing the "taboo" of suicide, lower the threshold at which point the behaviour is manifested, and introduced suicide as an acceptable alternative response or option to life stresses.

Characteristics of Limitation Suicides

(1) Imitation suicides and clustering seem to be concentrated among teenagers.

(2) Clustering appears more strongly among females than males in the USA.

(3) Models who possess engaging qualities, who have high status or are depicted as martyrs are more likely to prompt imitation. Behaviours depicted as resulting in gains, including notoriety are more likely to cause imitation.

(4) Imitation suicides also depend on : knowledge of how to perform the suicide; preexisting mental health problems, family history of suicidal behaviour, "pathological" identification with the victim.

(5) Persons whose social support is weak may be specially vulnerable : students who have joined their schools recently, students who come from a troubled family, persons who have recently experienced death of someone close to them or who have recently lost their jobs.

If one goes by the details of self-immolations and other suicides which were attempted in the wake of anti-Mandal agitations we find that they fit in neatly with the characteristics outlined above:

- most self-immolations involved teenagers;
- details of how to perform suicides were publicized in the press reports;
- a large number of those who committed suicide had weak social support mechanisms, some came from troubled families, some had pre-existing mental health problems and some had lost their jobs or not been able to obtain any;
- suicides were given prominent coverage;
- victims were portrayed as martyrs;
- it was widely reported that the agitation could bring about the fall of the ruling party.

Prevention of Imitative Suicides

The knowledge regarding imitative suicides outlined above has been taken seriously by many societies. A workshop for developing recommendations for a community plan for the prevention and containment of suicide clusters was jointly sponsored by the Centres for Disease Control in the USA and the New Jersey State Department of Health in 1987. A summary of these recommendations is given below and the details can be obtained from the original publications.[11,12]

Summary of Recommendations

i. A community should review these recommendations and develop its own response before the onset of a suicide cluster.

ii. The response to the crisis should involve all concerned sectors of the community and should be coordinated by:
   A. Coordinating Committee, which manages the day-to-day response to the crisis, and
   B. Host Agency, whose responsibilities would include "housing" the plan, monitoring the incidence of suicide, and calling meetings of the Coordinating Committee when necessary.

iii. The relevant community resources should be identified.

iv. The response plan should be implemented under either of the following two conditions:
   A. When a suicide cluster occurs in the community, or
   B. When one or more deaths from trauma occur in the community, especially among adolescents or young adults, which may potentially influence others to attempt or contemplate suicide.

v. If the response plan is to be implemented, the first step should be to contact and prepare those groups who will play key roles in the first days of the response.

vi. The response should be conducted in a manner that avoids glorification of the suicide victims and minimises sensationalism.

vii. Persons who may be at high risk of suicide should be identified and have at least one screening interview with a trained counsellor; these persons should be referred for further counselling or other services as needed.

viii. A timely flow of accurate, appropriate information should be provided to the media.

ix. Elements in the environment that might increase the likelihood of further suicides or suicide attempts should be identified and changed.

x. Long-term issues suggested by the nature of the suicide cluster should be addressed.

The Association of State and Territorial Health officials and the New Jersey Department of Health of the USA have also evolved a set of guidelines on the phenomenon of contagion and the reporting of suicide. These are outlined below:

Things to Encourage

Encourage explanation by health officials to new professionals of the nature of and the scientific basis for concern about contagion.

Encourage coverage which describes available helping resources.

Encourage coverage which explains how to identify persons at high risk of suicide.

Encourage coverage which presents factual information about risk factors for suicide.

Encourage news interviews with *local* experts, whenever possible.

Encourage ongoing, open dialogue between local health officials and news media representatives.

Things to Avoid

Avoid presenting a simplistic explanation for suicide, for example, "he committed suicide because he received low grades in school".

Avoid repetitive, ongoing, or excessive coverage of suicide.

Avoid sensational coverage of suicide.

> Sensational news coverage represents an effort to whip up public interest in the story via lurid healines and sometimes grotesque details about the suicide (Example of former: "Romeo and Juliet Commit Suicide" headline.) Sensationalism can be minimised by avoiding such lurid headlines, by decreasing the prominence of the news article (for example, by placing it further back in the newspaper), by avoiding dramatic photographs of funerals, the victim's bedroom, the site of the suicide, etc

Avoid coverage that amounts to a "how-to" manual for those who might wish to imitate the suicide.

Avoid coverage that legitimises suicide as a reasonable alternative among a range of reasonable alternatives, rather than a rare act of a troubled or severely depressed individual.

(Next two are highly related--the group did not come to consensus as to whether or not to combine them. I'd recommend combining them because (a) they are conceptually hard to distinguish, even for those of us who were at the meeting, and (b) for the sake of being as concise as possible.)

Avoid news coverage that glorifies the victim or glamourises suicide. Examples would include headlines such as "Hundreds Mourn Teenager's Untimely Suicide."

Avoid coverage which presents the "All-American suicide victim"--this is the natural consequence of a shallow investigation.

People naturally wish to be kind to the grieving survivors, which tendency often expresses itself in statements that a given suicide victim was "a regular guy", "had no problems", "had a great future", etc. This is what reporters tend to be told; when it is reported that way, it is hardly the reporter's sole fault. Deeper investigation almost always reveals deeper problems.

Avoid coverage that presents suicide as a tool by which things are accomplished. If suicide is seen as accomplishing specific ends, it may seem a more attractive alternative to a disturbed, potentially suicidal person. Public eulogising can promote suicide as an effective tool, if the suicidal act is seen as the first or only effective thing the victim did which attracted positive public attention. Reporting that the victim committed suicide to "get even with his parents", or to "end his suffering" might also do this.

Indian Response to "Mandal"-related Suicides

It is somewhat frightening that none of the newspapers or well-known psychologists interviewed in the press mentioned details of the guidelines outlined above. It is not surprising therefore that none of the activities mentioned under the section "things to encourage" were carried out.

If one goes through the list of "things to avoid" we find that the press and most politicians did exactly what we are advised *not* to do as the following sampling indicates.

Avoid presenting a simplistic explanation

> "The government is responsible for these deaths". Arun Shourie, *Indian Express.*
>
> ".... a student, Sunil Kumar, committed suicide on Friday protesting against the government decision to implement the Mandal Commission Report..." *Indian Express,* editorial, September 25, 1990.
>
> "Quota claims six more lives", *The Times of India*, October 6, 1990.
>
> "...young men and women are killing themselves in protest against a policy which they see as u[illegible]st..." *The Illustrated Weekly*, October 7, 199[illegible]

Avoid repetitive, ongoing or excessive coverage of suicide

All newspapers and magazines carried the news prominently everyday--TV newsmagazines like *Newstrack* gave it prominent coverage.

Avoid sensational coverage of suicide

All newspapers published pictures of suicide victims including pictures of victims on fire. Pictures of a self-immolator on fire were published on covers by national magazines including *India Today*, and *The Illustrated Weekly*. Headlines were no less sensational:

-- "Chetan Dead", box item, *The Times of India*, page 1, October 30, 1990.

-- "Mass Immolation Threat in Rajasthan" *The Times of India*, page 1, September 21, 1990.

-- "Eye witness said, while ablaze, Akhilesh was shouting anti-reservation slogans", *The Times of India*, page 1, September 24, 1990.

Avoid coverage that amounts to a "how-to" manual

Most media reports gave details of how and where the suicide was committed, for example, "Savita Gupta (18) of the Guru Nanak Higher Secondary School, sneaked out of the prayer hall and poured kerosene over her body and set herself ablaze", *The Hindu*, November 28, 1990.

Avoid news coverage that glorifies the victim

> "... the most seriously injured among the three, Akhilesh Pande, was flown to Bombay for treatment in the Chief Minister, Mr Sunderlal Patwa's plane", editorial, *Indian Express*, September 25, 1990.
>
> "... the blend of intense idealism and fury which seems to motivate large sections of youth and which, along with an intense feeling of desperation, have led to suicide attempts", editorial, *Indian Express*, September 29, 1990.
>
> "The cause the students have taken up is the country's cause", Arun Shourie, *Indian Express*.

Glorification was further encouraged by politicians making statements on behalf of the students, publicised visits to victims in hospitals and students erecting memorials for those committing suicide.

Avoid coverage that presents suicide as a tool by which things are accomplished

> "Students are using their own bodies as the ultimate weapon against the state", Ananta Giri, *Indian Express*, October, 10, 1990.
>
> "The task of protecting Indian identity has now fallen substantially on the students", Girilal Jain, *Sunday Mail*, September 30, 1990.
>
> "Backlash! Can the government survive the Mandal Commission?" Cover page with photograph of student in flames, *The Illustrated Weekly*, October 1-13, 1990.

(Note: Examples from only a few newspapers have been used. However, no other publication behaved any differently)

It is quite clear that the blame for the phenomenon of students' suicides spreading over large parts of North India and continuing for a long time must be shared between the press, the social scientists and politicians of India. In an era when knowledge and information are supposedly easy to obtain they can't be allowed to pretend ignorance of well-known phenomena. In retrospect it appears obvious that most editorial writers, reporters and politicians were more interested in using the suicides as a tool to score points against the politicians in power than in actually limiting damage.

Ironically, one of the few persons who acted according to the suggested guidelines for controlling imitation suicides, knowingly, unknowingly or for selfish motives, was the then Prime Minister V.P. Singh! He didn't give simplistic explanations, didn't dwell on them day after day, didn't glamourise the victims and didn't present the suicides as a tool by which things would eventually get accomplished. ■

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Concept of Indian Nation

In the background of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the European Community, questions about India's future as a nation are being raised. Here are two contributions on the subject the first by Dr Behera who is a member of the Indian Foreign Service, and the second by Professor Bipan Chandra, the noted historian on the staff of Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi -Editor

A Nation-State Connotation

SUBHAKANTA BEHERA

In the wake of the dismantling of the Soviet Union, a need has arisen to re-examine the viability of multinational nation-states.

A multinational nation-state in contrast to an uni-national nation-state contains distinct nationalities but with a proviso for forging a common identity, and by logic this proviso denotes a post-facto situation. A nation or nationality comes into existence by the transformation of an ethnic group into a self-conscious political entity, or by amalgamation of diverse ethnic groups and the formation of an inter-ethnic, composite or homogenous national culture. In either of the cases of nation-formation, the ultimate is the creation of a country of one's own which is not always a feasible proposition.

However, when a single nation carves out its own sovereign state, it becomes an uni-national nation-state, but amalgamation of diverse ethnic groups into an inter-ethnic composite culture results in a multi-national nation-state like India. In the latter case, the constituent ethnic groups are identified with the new composite culture. Take the case of India where constituent ethnic groups like the Biharis, Oriyas, Bengalis, Punjabis, Telugus, Tamils and others are known first by their identity as Indians (*Bharatiya*) which is indicative of a composite culture. The Indian is thus a genus-nationality. These ethnic communities, according to Indologist Paul R. Brass, are nationalities because they are politicised, with recognised group rights in a political system. All of them have distinct ethnic identity which may also be termed as nationality-identity. In a multinational state, it is always safer to keep a distinction between nationality-identity and nationalism, the latter being state-centred.

Nationalism provides the foundation on which the edifice of a nation-state is erected. But a nation-state does not come into existence all of a sudden; the gestation period for it is a long one having the legacy of state conceptions and institutions. In a well-documented study, two Indologists Rudolph and Rudolph have pointed out two different historical processes, that is, the transformation of a sub-continental empire into a modern multinational state like India, and the transformation of regional kingdoms into nation-states of Western Europe via absolute monarchies. Thus, a nation-state can be either multinational or uni-national, depending on the historical pattern of transformation of 'many into one' or 'one into one'. In the former case, since a composite national culture needs to be developed, a method of absorption and assimilation with reference to a common culture has to be pursued. When and where this does not succeed, tension has mounted in inter-nationality relations and 'part-whole' relations as well.

This argument can be substantiated by a comparative analysis of India and the erstwhile Soviet Union. Indian or *Bharatiya* connotes identity of a people living within the territory of India or *Bharatvarsha*. The Indian identity cuts across all other identities like Bengali, Oriya, Punjabi or Telugu. Moreover, the Indian refers to a pre-determined socio-cultural identity which is distinct and exclusive. From this identity has developed nationalism of all Indians which is pan-Indian to all intents and purposes. But in the erstwhile Soviet Union there was nothing called Soviet nationalism, in the absence of which constituent nationalities developed individual ethnic nationalism. It was ultimately articulated in terms of separate states which became a reality after seventy five years of dialectical relationship with the Centre.

In a multinational state, the agency of state needs to follow a policy of absorption and assimilation as prerequisite for nation-building; otherwise, constituent nationalities would demand a major say for the group in the political system as a whole; or, the control over a piece of territory within the country; or, they demand a country of their own with full sovereignty. In all these cases, the viability of the nation-state is challenged and compromised. Given the history of multinational states, this danger can be warded off by a judicious policy of absorption and assimilation which may be implemented as a necessary complement to a consociational approach overcoming the differences among nationalities.

India as a multinational state has developed a unique system of absorption and assimilation over its long historical past. Right from the days of the Indus Valley civilisation, there has always been fruitful intermixture of foreigners and natives. The Aryans came to India from outside and, in course of time, got rooted in the Indian soil. What we call today the Vedic civilisation was not exclusively Aryan, but enriched and contributed by the Indus civilisational elements. In the early centuries of the Christian era, India experienced successive phases of invasion and the rule of foreign tribes such as the Bactrian Greeks, Shakas and Kushanas whose cultural and political legacies became a part of the pan-Indian culture.

The most visible period of assimilation and absorption was during the Muslim rule in India. In all walks of life, a synthesis took place between the Muslim patterns, and the indigenous Indian patterns in the direction of evolving a common, composite Indian culture. The *mansabadari* system and the *Din-i-Illahi* introduced by the Mughal emperor, Akbar, were really a part of the grand imperial vision of creating a common, composite Indian culture cutting across all religions and languages. In recent times, India has incorporated into its system a lot of Western ideas, values and models that are now the very essentials of the Indian system, and also contributory to the evolving of a composite culture and heritage.

Thus, India from the very beginning, possesses the unique mechanism of absorption and assimilation which has now been inbuilt in the Indian system. Development of this mechanism is a long historical process which is also dependent on circumstances, necessity and expediency of the situation. Given all these considerations, it is too idealistic and utopian to

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expect the erstwhile Soviet Union to have developed this mechanism within a short span of seventyfive years of its life. Moreover, the term 'Soviet' connotes an objective condition which is establishment- and ideology-oriented. Unlike 'Indian', it does not presuppose multi-symbol congruence of nationalities which is a 'must' for consociation, absorption and assimilation.

The concept and institution of the nation-state might be comparatively new in world history, but the groundwork for it in India had started even in the early period of History. The Mauryan empire in the pre-Christian era and the Gupta empire in the early Christian era had the elements of a subcontinental state. These empires had established hegemony over diverse regional kingdoms which were controlled by effective administrative mechanism, well-organised bureaucracy, and means of penetration and control. Later on, the Mughal empire perfected and strengthened the imperial state-structure through the creation of a centralised military-revenue arrangement, the *mansabdari* system, and a well-knit administrative organisation. The British empire in India was modelled largely on the Mughal system.

Although throughout the Indian history the subjugated regional kingdoms have stood in tension with the imperial authority, the regional needs, aspirations and demands have always been accommodated. The strategy propounded in the *Arthasastra* was 'that subordinate rulers shall be preserved and respected in their customs and territorial jurisdiction if they acknowledge via respect and tribute, the superior authority of a ruler of rulers'. This principle guided the statecraft of subcontinental empires. This strategy was instrumental in forging a synthesis of customs, systems and cultures. The historical legacies of imperial states thus provided models and precedents for the multinational state of modern India. Rudolph and Rudolph have pointed out that the Indian empire became a multinational state whereas in Western Europe, regional kingdoms were transformed into absolute monarchies and then into nation-states.

The nation-state of India is multinational in composition, but its common, composite culture speaks for all the nationalities. All the people of India address to a common sentiment, that is, 'Indian'. Recently, some scholars have tried to interpret India in terms of civilisational entity. India is, no doubt, a great ancient civilisation, but the civilisational approach most often, encourages communal interpretation of history and does not speak anything about independent political statehood. On the other hand, India in terms of a nation-state, reiterates a common identity of the people living in the territory called India, and indicates an objective, discernible condition which is independence, sovereignty and exclusiveness. ■

Basis of India's Nationhood

BIPAN CHANDRA

The break-up of the Soviet Union has led many to question the viability of the Indian Union and the Indian nation. Others tend to compare India with West European nations and come to a similar dismal conclusion.

This questioning is, however, based on a gross historical misunderstanding, for the historical processes through which West European nations came into being or the Soviet Union was formed were very different from those which formed the Indian nation.

A nation is the product of a concrete historical process Its formation can be studied only by examining its concrete historical development and not through a static definition, as is usually done by political scientists or as was done by Stalin.

Tsarist Russia was a "prison-house of nationalities" where one nationality, Russia, dominated and oppressed the other nationalities culturally, economically and politically. The success of the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the Bolshevik success in the Civil War was, in part, because of the revolts of the suppressed nationalities. But the latter did not struggle together as a part of a national or socialist liberation movement. The ensuing union of socialist states was also the result not of a prolonged organic historical process but of the gradual imposition of a union upon the liberated nationalities.

Undoubtedly, the union resulted in the cultural and economic development of the erstwhile oppressed and exploited areas, but the psychological union obviously did not go far, especially as the Great Russian chauvinism continued. Moreover, the different nationality-republics functioned together less as a result of mutual interaction and more as a result of the common Russian umbrella.

In Western Europe, nation and nationalism were largely, though not wholly, the result of common language and culture (neither France nor Britain were ethnically or linguistically homogeneous till the nineteenth century and are not fully so even today) as also the bourgeoisie's struggle against feudal domination and for the creation of a unified market and state. In the late nineteenth century and the twentieth century nationalism in European countries took the form of chauvinism and jingoism around imperialism and the effort to maintain their dominant economic position in the modern world system.

In India, on the other hand, nation and nationalism were not the results of ethnicity or common language or of a dominant position acquired by any one ethnic group or region. They were basically the products of the struggle for freedom of the entire Indian people from British rule.

This difference also enables us to define the nation in the Indian context. The Indian nation means the coming into being of the Indian people as a historical entity. The Chinese, for example, do not use the words, "Chinese nation" but the "Chinese people" as a unity.

The nation or the people were formed in India, not because their society or culture became homogeneous but because their economic and political interests and the interests of their social and cultural development became one, even when they continued to be differentiated by language and ethnicity.

Consequently, the question whether India is a nation or a federation of nationalities loses much of its relevance. What we have to do is to recognise that the Indian people have historically developed both common economic, political, social and cultural interests as well as cultural and linguistic heterogeneity.

◆

NATION-FORMATION is both an objective and a subjective process. For a nation to be formed, its economy and polity and—to some extent—its culture have to increasingly get integrated. Though that is necessary it is not sufficient, for the process of nation-formation can be interrupted and disrupted by subjective political, ideological and emotional factors. In other words, it all depends on concrete historical development.

Pre-colonial India had already acquired some elements of common existence and common consciousness. Despite its immense diversity, certain strands of a common cultural heritage had also developed. Both at the level of the upper classes and the working masses, elements of a common, composite culture including values had grown. The politics of the rulers—of kingdoms and empires—also cut across regions. The territorial reach of the more ambitious engulfed the sub-continent. The concepts of *Bharatvarsha* and Hindustan were realities of Indian history.

True, India was invaded and conquered on several occasions. But the successive waves of invaders invariably settled down here and became assimilated. The new ruling classes merged with the older ones. The Mughals in North India, for example, relied on the earlier zamindars, often Rajputs, and the scribal castes, such as the Kayasths, to collect revenue and administer the empire. Neither the earlier ruling classes nor the common people identified the new rulers as foreigners, except perhaps in the first generation.

There was, of course, resistance from the top and, especially during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, from popular rebellions, but neither involved ethnic grounds. The colonial and communal historians later invented the tradition for ethnic or religious resistance against the Mughals. Interestingly, even though many regional chieftains fought against the Mughal rulers and succeeded in setting up independent kingdoms, they continued to work within the framework of the Mughal revenue and administrative system.

Also, despite backward means of transport and communication, great deal of India-wide trade, specialisation for production and credit networks developed, especially during the late medieval period.

The colonisation of Indian economy, society and polity further strengthened the process of India's unification. The process of Indians developing into a unified "people" was very much quickened from about the middle of the nineteenth century. Growth of internal and external trade, destruction of the relative self-sufficiency of the rural economy and of different regions, creation of an all-India market, introduction of modern trade industries, banking and means of communication on an all-India scale, and a uniform system of law, administration and education increasingly unified the country and created a single economic, administrative and political entity.

Colonialism did, of course, produce regional economic imbalances but despite the disparity, the economic linkage between the regions was more important. Moreover, regional imbalances were the result of the capitalist and colonial character of the unification of the Indian economy.

Above all, however, it was the common enemy in the form of colonialism and the struggle against it which provided new uniting bonds to the Indian people. The very existence of foreign rule that oppressed all the Indian people irrespective of their social class, caste, region, religion, or language acted as a unifying factor. This aspect was clearly seen by John Seeley, the Oxford Professor, who had denied that India was a nation and was the first to describe it as a "geographical expression", but who also wrote that the British might bring the Indian nation into being by providing a common target to its people. Consequently, the anti-imperialist struggle and the feeling of solidarity in its course, contributed powerfully to the making of the Indian nation.

Moreover, as the Indian nation was being formed, the identity of Indians being one 'people' was coming into existence as a result of the conscious ideological and political practices of the national movement. Social reality is seldom given directly to our senses; we cannot grasp it empirically. Contradictions with colonialism or even the character of colonialism were not directly visible to the Indian people. Both anti-colonialism and the Indian nation were, therefore, in part the result of the political and ideological struggle by the national movement. It was during this movement that the Indian people acquired the necessary collective self-consciousness and identity of being one nation. Looked at from this point of view, "nation" was not a datum prior to the national movement or provided to it. Perhaps, without this movement, Indians would have remained merely the inhabitants of a geographical region on the map.

It may also be noted that this is where the political scientists and Stalin make a major error. They both presuppose a static society. They assume that first a nation is formed and then the struggle for its emancipation or consolidation takes place. The conservative nationalists and the communalists are, of course, even more extreme in their belief. For them, to quote Raphael Samuel, "nationality is something unproblematic and pre-given, a unity which defies time and space and links past and present in a mystic union".

In fact, to repeat, there is no such thing as a nation in abstract. Nation is a process of becoming, and a rather recent phenomenon to boot the world over. In India's case, the formation of the nation and the struggle for its emancipation are simultaneous. They are interdependent; their relationship is dialectical. National consciousness motivates struggle and struggle spurs consciousness.

It is also important to note that the Indian national movement was not initiated as a federation of regional or linguistic-area based national movements which joined together to form the national movement. The movement was founded as an all-India movement which later acquired regional and language-based units or branches. Neither Europe nor the Soviet Union ever went through this experience. In Western Europe, the only similar experience could have been that of resistance against Nazi occupation. But this was not so: the resistance movements remained separate with British and American high commands providing the only linkages. Nor was there a Russia-wide revolution in 1917. The revolution of 1917 remained essentially a Russian Revolution.

Because the making of the Indian nation was and is a prolonged and continuous historical process and not an event, there was nothing inevitable or pre-ordained about it; it faced and still faces continuous challenges; it was and still is constantly open to interruption, disruption and even reversal. One such disruption occurred in 1947. The process has, therefore, to be carefully sustained, promoted and nurtured.

Part of this nurturing has to be constant remaking and redefinition of nation and nationalism as the common people, who really constitute the nation, become more active and more conscious agents of history. The debate should be on what is the agenda of the nation and nationalism and how the process of naiton-making and of national liberation struggle which created the nation are to be taught to the young and not on whether it was a good or a bad "thing" that India became a nation and the Indian people organised a national liberation struggle. After all, we can only study and learn from history and not remake it to suit our views.

It is then also clear that I do not agree with the view which regards nationalism as an inherently negative ideology because it is a "bourgeois class ideology", and which, therefore, has to be opposed from the people's point of view, or—at least—ignored as being relevant only to the ruling classes. Without arguing at length against this view, I may only suggest that the way India was formed into a nation by the people and the way they organised the national liberation struggle effectively negates this view.

Nor can universalism be used to counter loyalty to the nation-patriotism. It is being said that Europe's coming together and formation of an economic and political union is a proof that we in India do not need nationalism and should not promote one. But this is an entirely wrong reading of the historical and political processes in Europe or in India.

Europe is trying to reach today where we started from in 1947. After bitter lessons of the last four hundred years, it is trying to unite into an economic and political union to fare better and on a stronger footing in the world of political and economic giants, even while maintaining the culture and lingusitic autonomy of its different units. It is also trying to replace the existing narrower territorial nationalisms with a European nationalism. It is opening its doors to European citizens but not to the Africans or Asians. Vis-a-vis non-Europeans, including the USA and Japan, it is trying to emerge as a stronger unit—and that is why its constituents are uniting.

This is exactly what we have already accomplished in India, India's linguistic units are united economically and politically even while culturally autonomous. For the foreseeable future this is how we have to develop further. Indian nationalism will become irrelevant not by its negation or by destruction of Indian unity but only when the rest of the world will also no longer be formed into territorial, political-economic units, that is, nations. ■

(Courtesy, *The Statesman*)

Subhas Mukhopadhyay—"Subhas-da" to all of us belonging to the younger generation of Bengali poets and writers influenced by his poetry—is the recipient of the twenty-seventh Jnanpith Award for 1991 for his "outstanding contribution to the enrichment of Indian literature through creative writing in Bengali from 1971 to 1985".

One of the most striking poets of post-Tagore Bengal, Subhas-da is a man of deep commitment. A Marxist by conviction, he has, however, severed connections with the Communist establishments having seen through the hypocrisy of mouthing slogans of democracy while discarding in practice the democratic essence of functioning of the party or the administration. An outspoken supporter of Khrushchev's policies, he was the first to translate Solzhenitsyn in Bengali. His other translations include Nazim Hikmet's poems and the Rosenbergs' Diary. Naturally drawn towards the Gorbachevian revolution, he was the first Leftist poet to openly denounce last year's August coup in erstwhile USSR even before it was crushed by mass resistance. Wedded to nationalist values and committed to the welfare of the depressed and the disprivileged, his reportages on the Great Bengal Famine of 1943—subsequently compiled in Amar Bangla *(My Bengal)—exerted a powerful influence on a whole generation of Bengali writers.*

Since the late fifties Subhas-da's poetry took a new turn, his expressions acquiring greater depth and appeal with the frequent use of the colloquial language and metaphors. He won the Sahitya Akademi Award for 1965 for his Juto Durei Jai *(Far As I May Wander). In 1977 he received the Afro-Asian Lotus Prize and in 1982 he was honoured with the Kumaran Asan Award (of Kerala). Always reflecting the voice of the nation and oppressed humanity, he has been devastatingly sarcastic of the party apparatchiks even while agonising over the massacre of innocents propelled by ultra-Leftism in the seventies.*

His prose is as exquisite as his poetry. He edited the foremost literary journal of Bengal, Parichay, *and later was the joint editor of the popular children's magazine,* Sandesh, *with the late Satyajit Ray revealing in the process his calibre as a storyteller for children.*

In September 1971 was published his Ei Bhai *(Hey Brother). The book contains a poem, "In Our Hands", excerpts from which appear most appropriate today:*

> The more our eyes open up,
> the more the fists gain strength.
>
> They wanted to sell it in dollars,
> we have bought it
> with our life-blood.
>
> They had thrown it away,
> we have picked it up.
>
> Look, the banner of freedom is
> now
> in our hands.

Subhas-da, now 73, has traversed a long distance. But his love for India, Bengal, the Bengali language, the people of this majestic country—one of his poems, "Proclamation", written at the height of the freedom struggle, remains one of the best expositions of the patriotic radicalism of the forties steeped as it is in profound admiration for our death-defying toiling multitudes—has not in the least diminished with the passage of time. So also his love for Calcutta, the city of his creativity. The following lines provide a glimpse of that love and with it, a measure of Subhas-da's artistry.

Sumit Chakravartty

My Calcutta

SUBHAS MUKHOPADHYAY

It happened on a wet day. As I was trudging down the lane on my way home, I was all of a sudden wonder-struck. The sky overladen with clouds fell flat before my feet, in a puddle.

Since then, I was inclined to make peace with the city.

The wan, lacklustre city slowly won over my heart. Daily I roamed the streets, ever enlarging my area of circumspection. Burning with curiousity I would often go too far and get lost. But in that process I also learnt a thing or two.

At noon, when the streets were empty, a kaleidoscopic spectacle would burst forth with colourful sarees fluttering, up and down in the air. I feasted my eyes on the sight and stood entranced. On some of the neighbouring streets one could run into a double dyed riot of colour in front of a *shaalkar*—a dyer and cleaner of shawls.

At dawn in semi-darkness some faceless but familiar voice would chant the *ramdhoon*, while pedalling towards the Ganges for a holy dip. There was something in it that cast a spell on me.

During the rains the spate of water dashing down the sewers would give me the impression of a faraway cascade that I had dreamt of, but never seen....

It was in our tea-shop sessions that I was initiated into the world of modern poetry by my knowing friends. Till then I had been steeped in Tagore's poems and songs. But I had felt something wanting. In that frame of mind, I had ventured to write a letter-inverse addressing Tagore simply as "Rabibabu". I had complained that though his poetry captivated me by its creation of a dream world, this city's harsh reality gave me a rude shock. In the end, I had implored that either he withdrew his poetry, or changed the veritable world. This was subsequently published in the weekly *Vishan*.

In Samar Sen's romantically inclined urban poetry I found the verisimilitude of our everyday existence animated by a new spirit. I was enthralled when I met him for the first time. Knowing my active participation in mass demonstrations, he gifted me his *Handbook of Marxism*. Calcutta's air seemed to pulsate with new ideas and new forms. But its trend-setters and hair-splitters went hand in hand.

The quarterly *Parichay*, edited by Sudhindranath Datta, was instrumental in bringing together the best minds not only in its pages but also in the weekly get-together at the editor's home.

We, young writers, felt more at home in Buddhadeva Bose's Kavita-Bhavan. Jibanananda Das used to show up occasionally during his visits to Calcutta.

The pressing need of the time kept a few writers of promise from creative pursuits. It happened when the Second World War followed in the wake of the Spanish Civil War, which had already set an example before the writers of all nations of laying down one's life for freedom, democracy and human dignity.

But Calcutta refused to give up poetry under any circumstances. When the people demonstrated and shouted slogans, the streets vibrated with marching footsteps.

As air-raid precautions, slit-trenches had been dug in open spaces, baffle-walls were erected to withstand bomb-blasts and street-lights were masked. Often, with the sounding of all-clear sirens, Calcutta was agog, discovering subversive and fiery posters put up on walls under the cover of air-raid signals.

Here ends the story of my teenage love for Calcutta. Our city has since then been overriden with crises, one after another. The war was dogged by the famine. The people who fed Calcutta perished with hunger on its pavements. The eve of Independence was defiled by fratricide. The uprooted humanity of eastern Bengal filled all the empty space of the city.

We have a saying in Bengali—"If you are a good man, then on a tamarind leaf you can accommodate nine."

Calcutta has a golden heart. It lends its hands to everybody who needs it. It is a city where Mammon yields the palm to the muses.

Do not curse the city. Thunder against its ills. Its heartbeat will never stop. ■

(From: "The City's Heartbeat: A Poet's Memories" in *The Calcutta Psyche*, India International Centre Quarterly, Winter 1990-91)

NASIM ZEHRA: India-Pakistan

(Continued from page 4)

At the same seminar, veteran journalist Girilal Jain commenting on Indo-Pak ties called it a "people's illusion" that "we can live with Pakistan in peace and amity...what we can have is a truce". Jain further invoked the Islamic fundamentalism bogey. India's survival, he claimed, would be affected to a great extent by the forces of "Islamic fundamentalism". He equated the global Islamic community with "a stinking corpse" which had not experienced any change over the last thousand years.

Such mindless rhetoric is lethal. People living in subhuman conditions of hunger, anger, lack of dignity and underdeveloped thought processes are often easily swayed by such rhetoric. Such rhetoric drowns wise words of brave peaceniks like V.P. Singh and I.K. Gujral.

Pakistan too may have its share of those wanting to "fly the Pakistani flag on the Red Fort". It does not, however, have an equivalent of Hindu extremist forces occupying the centre-stage of Pakistani politics. Today, few political parties are opposed to normalising relations with India provided outstanding bilateral problems, starting with Kashmir, are resolved. Yet, the Indian rejectionist posture on all bilateral problems have produced growing cynicism vis-a-vis Indian liberal, secular and democratic culture among even those Pakistani intellectuals who until recently blamed the Pakistani establishment of turning Pakistanis into "India haters".

No breakthrough in Indo-Pak relations will occur unless outstanding bilateral problems are resolved. Insane levels of defence spending, the launching of Agni and Prithvi missiles, and the pursuit of nuclear programmes, for now, are the realities of Indo-Pak relations. Even Washington's tutoring in peace-making via confidence building measures is unlikely to work. Meanwhile, given their institutional proclivities, the intelligence agencies of both countries will deepen the distrust and divide...through Sindh and Khalistan. Competent diplomats, at best, will work at damage limitation. Without enlightened nationalism this will not change. India will have to take the first step. ■

ACHIN VANAIK: Shape of Things to Come

(Continued from page 6)

eradication is the best answer but it is not happening fast enough and we must still do something about curbing population growth. Collusion between the global elite of the OECD countries and the social elites of the Second and Third Worlds will be the order of the day.

As for the global ecological system, a similar pattern of thinking as on population control will emerge. The OECD will avoid any major sacrifice on its part yet demand that in the interests of the global environment the poor countries forsake a large part of their aspirations to development. It is a strange mix. The OECD ideologues will say capitalism is the only answer to the riddle of economic development on any fast-paced and mass cumulative scale must be avoided. Large enclaves of prosperity within a generally impoverished Third World and collusion once again between social elites outside the OECD and the OECD countries themselves is the way to satisfy all.

The Montreal Pact to which India is acceding is a sign of things to come and the arguments for collusion will be the same. Yes, there is environmental colonialism and there should be proportionately greater sacrifice by the OECD countries but they won't do it; meanwhile, we must still do something about halting environmental degradation. This is the real face of the New World Order to which we are heading. ■

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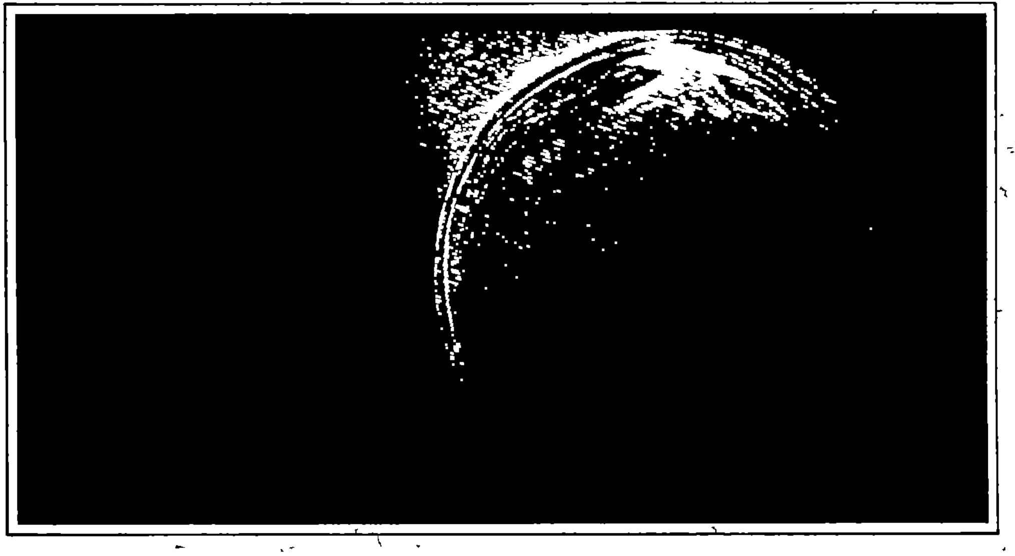

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Bush-Yeltsin Accord ● Earth Summit Outcome ● Burma

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POLITICAL NOTEBOOK

Electing the President

The process of electing the country's next President has been set in motion with the Congress and sections of the Opposition filing the nominations of Dr S.D. Sharma and Prof G.G. Swell respectively for the country's highest office.

The developments relating to the choice of Presidential candidates have revealed the failure of the consensus approach by means of which a commonly agreed personality could have been projected for occupying the post. This happened primarily due to the Congress' inability or reluctance to simultaneously come out with the names of the nominees for the posts of both the President and the Vice-President, as had been suggested by certain Opposition leaders and tacitly accepted by Prime Minister Narasimha Rao. Dr Sharma is a person who is by and large non-controversial like our outgoing President, R. Venkataraman. However, even if the Prime Minister had held consultations with the Opposition leaders on his nomination (and secured public support from the CPI-M to his candidature) various factors including problems within the Congress prevented him from coming out with the name of the Vice-Presidential nominee. This has evoked criticism from the CPI-M leaders who had already voiced their decision to back Dr Sharma and did not deem it necessary to change their stance subsequently.

The BJP too was not averse to Dr Sharma but was insisting on the Vice-Presidential post going to a figure from the Opposition. Having failed to elicit a favourable response from the Prime Minister on this demand they decided to sponsor Dr Swell whose candidature for Presidentship was first mooted by none other than the Socialist firebrand, George Fernandes.

The CPI-M's decision to back Dr Sharma injects a new element in our polity. The party's Polit-Bureau has described him as a man of stature and underscored his "progressive" credentials. Nevertheless, this support to a candidate sponsored by the Congress is bound to fuel speculation of a Congress-CPI-M understanding (if not a "deal" between the two parties) on the national plane that could have far-reaching implications. Actually the CPI-M is more keen on getting an eminent and disinguished personality from the South—a member of the Scheduled Castes—elected as the Vice-President. Hence its decision to back Dr Sharma as part of a package deal the Prime Minister had reportedly promised to the Marxist leaders but eventually could not come out with due to compulsions within the ruling party.

One fall-out of these developments has been the divergent positions of the National Front and the Left on the Presidential nominee. With V.P. Singh stressing the need to have a candidate from the SC/ST category for the post of the President, the Janata Dal had practically no option but to back the candidature of Prof Swell, a Scheduled Tribe (Khasi) from Meghalaya. Thus caste

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became the real factor in the choice of the candidate. This is not to belittle the strength of the argument that an SC/ST as the President would have a symbolic effect on the lowest sections of our society. But excessive stress on the SC/ST criterion created a confusing situation, reference to which was made by several leaders at the stormy session of the National Front on June 23 that ended with the Front's eventual decision to back Prof Swell. On the other hand, the public statements of the CPI-M leaders—notably Jyoti Basu, the West Bengal Chief Minister, and Harkishan Singh Surjeet, the party General Secretary—in support of Dr Sharma before consulting the National Front leaders with whom they have a special relationship, also added to the confusion. In sharp contrast the CPI General Secretary, Indrajit Gupta, took a balanced position upholding the Left's principled approach to the problem that was reminiscent of the manner in which the CPI/CPI-M had sponsored such an eminent figure as V.R. Krishna Iyer as the Presidential candidate in 1987 when efforts were afoot in the Opposition ranks to evolve an opportunist alliance to ensure a second term for the person already occupying the office of the head of state, Giani Zail Singh.

One only hopes that the prevailing hazy scenario would be shortlived and issues of substance would come to the fore before long, that is, by the time the Presidential poll actually takes place.

June 24 *S.C.*

COMMENTARY

India and US

K. ELANGOVAN

The official level talks between India and the US to discuss the regional and global approaches in tackling the vexed issue of nuclear proliferation as well as to exchange views on the set of confidence building meausres that have been taken or are being contemplated, have failed to bridge the wide gulf which exists between New Delhi and Washington on the question of India signing the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Contrary to assertions in sections of the Indian media that Washington was not pressurising New Delhi to conclude the NPT, the fact is that the talks—led by Ms Teresita Schaffer, the US Deputy Assistant Secretary for South Asian Affairs, and Chandrashekhar Dasgupta, Additional Secretary in the External Affairs Ministry—only helped to bring out in bold relief the divergent standpoints of the two countries: Washington's long-term objective is to finally get New Delhi to sign the NPT while India's long-term perspective is to resist any such move that would strengthen the current advantage which the nuclear haves possess to the detriment of the others thereby striking at the roots of both disarmament and equal security for all states.

The talks also revealed the US opposition to global non-proliferation on the alibi that such an approach was impractical as it was unworkable. Hence pragmatism demanded a regional approach to the problem spelt out in the proposal for the so-called five nation conference aimed at making South Asia a nuclear weapons-free zone. This proposal has been mooted by Pakistan but its copyright belongs to the US. Thus Washington was keen to enlist New Delhi's support to the move.

The Indian side forcefully conveyed its reservations to the proposal in the wake of the steady Chinese nuclear build-up and Pakistan's feverish activity to acquire nuclear weapons capability. It is learnt that the tenability of the Indian concern on these two counts has been grudgingly recognised by the US side. This is being tom-tomed as a great "victory" for South Block by the Indian proponents of closer ties with the US even at the cost of our self-respect. Of course, we should be grateful for small mercies without for once being oblivious of what the US is doing against our sovereignty.

While there is nothing objectionable in holding such talks as those that took place in New Delhi on June 18 and 19 between the officials of the two sides, one is entitled to take serious exception to the manner in which our Finance Minister, the distinguished Dr Manmohan Singh, went out of his way to officially meet Ms Schaffer, who is just a Deputy Assistant Secretary in the US State Department. It is well known that Dr Manmohan Singh's credentials as a champion of Indo-US bonhomie have of late acquired a new dimension with his piloting of our new economic policies in collaboration with the World Bank and the IMF officials. But such actions as his meeting with Ms Schaffer only amount to devaluing the august office he currently holds, not to speak of erosion of India's prestige and authority. (In fact the Ministry of External Affairs was kept completely in the dark on such a meeting between Dr Singh and Ms Schaffer.)

And this at a time when the US President has reportedly decided to place India, alongwith four other countries, in the list of the Third World states to come under increased surveillance of the world's premier intelligence agency headquartered in Washington—the notorious CIA! Notwithstanding Dr Singh's eagerness to raise Indo-US friendship to a higher level in the company of even junior US officials, the self-dignity of the people of this great country would never countenance such moves in the light of President Bush's arms-twisting and blackmailing tactics. ■

Meaning of Washington Summit

SUMIT CHAKRAVARTTY

Regardless of the compulsions on the part of the Russian President, Boris Yeltsin, that were instrumental in effecting drastic cuts in the Russian strategic nuclear arsenal it inherited as the real successor of the erstwhile USSR, the historic nature of the Bush-Yeltsin accord on elimination of nuclear armaments can barely be overestimated by any serious observer of nuclear disarmament. Indeed the process of nuclear disarmament itself has acquired a "dramatic impetus" as a result of this accord, a point highlighted in influential sections of the Indian media as well.

Let us take a closer look at the accord. The Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), signed by the US President, George Bush, and the former Soviet President, Mikhail Gorbachev, at their last meeting exactly a year ago in the summer of 1991 in Moscow, visualised a marked reduction in the number of nuclear warheads—from over 22,000 to about 8500 by 2000 AD, something the Washington summit between the two leaders in May-June 1990 had failed to achieve even though the summiteers had met for the first time not as political adversaries. At Moscow the next year it was more than clear that with its burgeoning economic crisis the Soviet Union under Gorbachev was seeking a new kind of relationship with the US, one whose content would emphasise its inequality. Yet even in Moscow last year with Gorbachev at the helm the Soviet Union's superpower status was not in the least in question. Nor was Moscow's strategic parity with Washington in terms of nuclear weapons. The August coup later that year and the events it triggered thereafter, leading to the disintegration of the Soviet state itself, changed the entire scenario even on this score.

The Washington summit between the US and Russia—Bush and Yeltsin—has gone much beyond what the Moscow summit between the US and the USSR—Bush and Gorbachev—achieved last year. Thus it has been agreed that the nuclear warheads on both sides would be slashed to a total of 6500 by 2003 AD. For weeks there was speculation in the media as to whether such a drastic cut in nuclear weapons was at all possible as it would strip Russia of its strategic parity with the US in the nuclear field, the basis of its superpower status. In fact the key issue was the largescale reduction of the SS-18 and SS-24 intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) whose destruction the Russian experts had made conditional on the US scrapping of its sea-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs). The final agreement shows that US concerns on the preservation of the SLBMs have been by and large accepted whereas the Soviet land-based ICBMs, the SS-18s in particular, are to be substantially curtailed.

The unequal status of the Russian state in its dealings with the US had become transparent even during the Gorbachev period. The tyrannical Stalinist regimentation—a variant of fascism—that curbed democracy and individual initiative since the twenties as well as the thoroughly unplanned expenditures incurred on defence during the Brezhnev rule (also a consequence of the lack of democratic accountability) were primarily responsible for such a state of affairs. Hence there was not much point in Russia clinging on to its concept of "strategic parity" (which, incidentally, was perhaps the sole achievement of the Brezhnev era–a point spelt out in Gorbachev's report to the Twentyseventh Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1985). However,

Double Standard

One spoilsport journalist at the Yeltsin-Bush press conference just could not resist firing the question at President Bush: "Would you explain .. why friends (Russia and the US) who trust each other and do not plan to attack would still need 7000 nuclear warheads?" After beating rather long about the proverbial bush, the US President is reported to have said: "Who knows what lies out ahead?"

There lies the catch. The US and Russia quite understandably want to keep some of their powder dry and in reserve for unforeseen eventualities. Yet, paradoxically enough, the US does not want the same national precaution to be observed by any other nation. Without batting an eyelid only a day earlier the US President and his Administration had slapped fresh missile control sanctions against India, China, Iraq, North Korea and 17 other countries. The new sanctions as listed by the US Commerce Department provide for tighter controls on people and materials likely to be useful to these countries in building missiles or launch vehicles for war or peace. India's satellite launch vehicles are specifically included in the US hit list, as if the Indian space programme is geared to war and not peace. Replace the word war with defence, as the US does for itself, and India's or any other country's democratic choice for its own destiny becomes all too apparent. But as the lone superpower in today's world, the US simply cannot see any other country exercising the choice. One law for the US and another for the rest of the world.

(Editorial in *National Herald,* June 20, 1992) that in today's context such a development would give a further fillip to the hegemonic ambitions of the US adding a new dimension to the pronounced drift towards unipolarity in a broadly multipolar arrangement following the collapse of the bipolar global structure synchronising with the demise of the Cold War is a fact of life that cannot be ignored. While Yeltsin and his aide, the Russian Foreign Minister, Andrei Kozyrev (a well known pro-Bush "cowboy" whose appeasement of the occupants of the White House has won him derision from even the noted radicals still aligned to Yeltsin), are apparently responsible for acceptance of such a situation of inequality, the roots of such a development can be traced to the days of Stalin. For the statist socialism built under Stalin's orders without even a semblance of democracy could not have been sustained for any length of time. It could survive for such a long period only because of the Soviet, primarily Russian, people's extraordinary resilience and stoicism to withstand adversities and endure hardships that cannot but startle and evoke a sense of deep admiration for them in the minds of close observers, as this writer.

◆

BE that as it may, in the overall global perspective the Bush-Yeltsin accord's unique significance cannot be missed by any dispassionate analyst. Indeed most of the serious commentaries have brought out this fact in sharp focus. They have underscored that the highly positive element of such a development cannot be glossed over. At the same time any realistic assessment of the Washington summit must take into account the fundamental reality: the last pillar of the countervailing force constituting the erstwhile Soviet Union has been demolished. As Jim Hoagland writes in *The Washington Post*:

> By dropping Moscow's insistence that arms control agreements result in "parity", or equal levels of residual forces, Mr Yeltsin has acknowledged that Russia may continue to be a great military power in the world, but not more—not the accepted or aspiring equal of the United States
>
> That is the symbol Mr Yeltsin discarded In giving up by the turn of the century all his country's SS-18 missiles—multiple-warhead ICBMs that put the US nuclear strike force at risk—he loses his military's most threatening weapon

Yeltsin's predecessor Gorbachev had a comprehensive global vision—indeed a true measure of his contribution to world civilisation would be available much after his demise, contrary to what the one-track Stalinists in the erstwhile Soviet Union or countries like India might say—which both Yeltsin and Bush lack.

So, in a command performance in the US Congress Yeltsin underlined that he was doing all this to secure enhanced economic aid from the US. He bent over backwards to pledge that he would "personally return 'to his family' any missing GI still in Russia"—a statement that has provoked a bitter controversy inside Russia. No doubt his speech was well received and he won a standing ovation in the Congress. Now it is to be seen how much time the Congress would spend before passing the Bush Administration's Freedom Support Act authorising a $12 billion increase in the US commitment to the International Monetary Fund—an essential component of the $24 billion package to bail out Russia from its current economic crisis that Bush has proposed.

Interestingly, Yeltsin's move on arms cut will not be received kindly in Russia for varied reasons. As Vladimir Radyuhin writes in *The Hindu*:

> The resounding success of Mr Yeltsin's visit to the United States may help him win the sympathies of the American people and get Western credits but it is unlikely to raise his popularity at home. For one thing, the Opposition will try to capitalise on Mr Yeltsin's rejection of the principle of strategic parity with the United States, which for 30 years formed the basis of relations between the two superpowers. Opposition leaders have already accused Mr Yeltsin of surrendering Russia's sovereignty and succumbing to US dictat.
>
> These arguments, however, have long ceased to carry weight with common people in Russia who are more concerned with earning their daily bread They do not mind giving up military parity, or any other attribute of a superpower for that matter, if it helps ease their hardships. But the problem with the latest strategic arms accord is that its realisation will cost billions of roubles and may create new threats to the environment and even to human lives.

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MEANWHILE, public opinion in the US is demanding an end to US allies rearming themselves even after the Bush-Yeltsin summit. This is quite noteworthy and striking. Thus *The New York Times* writes:

> The world has barely absorbed the stirring summit news that the superpowers have agreed to drastic cuts in their fearsome nuclear arsenals. The West can now truly look to the ex-evil empire with hope instead of horror. So what are America's allies France and Britain doing? Increasing their nuclear arsenals With US help.
>
> The British and French decided to modernise their nuclear weapons starting years ago, long before Mikhail Gorbachev resigned and the Soviet Union dissolved Unless both countries move quickly to reconsider and retrench, they will remain the captives of dangerous, mindless momentum. The Bush-Yeltsin summit talks provide a simple, dramatic starting principle Reduce nuclear warheads.

On the eve of the Washington summit in May-June 1990, Gorbachev had in an interview to *Time* said:

> As we approach the end of the twentieth century, we must recognise that we are one civilisation. This simple but important truth should tell us a great deal about international politics and international relations. There must be a balance of interests; otherwise new upheavals await us. To accept the idea of mutual security means abandoning the idea of 'world leadership', which implies supremacy over others.

This voice of reason, based on Gorbachev's own new political thinking, is being sought to be drowned by the drumbeats signifying the US' shortsighted hegemonic designs following the end of the Cold War.

(Continued on page 33)

Balance-sheet of Rio Conference

NIRMALA LAKSHMAN

When the Earth Summit came to an end in Rio de Janeiro last week, it saw the largest gathering of world leaders ever in history chalking out with impassioned rhetoric a blueprint for the survival of the planet. However, for the Summit to become a defining moment in human history, the grand phrases and lengthy documents that emerged from the 12 days of intensive inter-governmental negotiation have to translate into forceful and meaningful action. And indeed, if the earth's sustainability has to be guaranteed for future generations, the followup to the Earth Summit is in many ways more important than the Summit itself.

As the meeting of governments wound up in Rio de Janeiro final approval was given to new principles of environmental stewardship but the Summit failed to obtain specific financial resources urgently needed to contain global environmental degradation. In assessing the outcome, opinion was sharply divided. There were some who felt that as the beginning of a new political process in a post-Cold War world of global cooperation, the Summit was a landmark event and there were others who expressed bitter disappointment that at the end of it all the world continued to be divided as sharply as ever between the rich and the poor, the powerful and the powerless, between the world's structured mechanisms and great bureaucracies and those that are its perpetual victims. Both the UN Secretary-General, Boutros Ghali, and Maurice Strong, the organiser of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, have warned in their concluding remarks that the current level of commitment is not comparable to the size and gravity of the problems.

However, the historic communion of nations in Rio de Janeiro did acknowledge that the world has radically to change its approach to economic growth and the problems of underdevelopment in the South. The basis of this new perception is not a sudden vision or charity from the nations of the North but their realisation that unless they radically alter their self-centred consumptive and profiteering lifestyles their own futures are gravely imperilled. Cuba's President, Fidel Castro, succinctly summed it up at the Rio conference by reminding the participants that what has to be paid to the earth is the ecological debt of the rich nations and not the foreign debt of impoverished countries who are the victims of economic colonialism as much as they were of the old political imperialism. As a result of all this the positive consequence is that the voices of the developing world were heard as never before. For instance, India and Malaysia doggedly opposed the move towards an international forest convention and after intense debate managed to reorient some crucial clauses in the statement on forest principles that would keep local community interests firmly tied in with programmes to protect forests. And yet it was a question of running to stay in place, "to not lose what we already have", as one Indian participant observed.

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AMONG the tangible achievements of the Rio conference was the signing of two conventions, one on Biological Diversity and another on Climate Change by 153 nations. The delegates also approved by consensus three non-binding documents: a statement on forestry principles, a declaration of principles on environmental policy and development initiatives, and Agenda 21, a programme of action into the next century in areas like poverty, population and pollution.

The environmental linkage gave Third World countries a new bargaining power at the conference and although funding and funding commitments fell far short of expectation, many Northern nations increased their specific contributions. Japan, for instance, has agreed to an increase of $ 1.4 billion a year in environmental assistance, doubling its past funding. The US has similarly doubled its aid next year by committing $ 750 million. The setting up of the new Commission on Environment and Sustainable Development will be an important first step if the Summit's work is to see results. It is expected to monitor and oversee the promises made in Agenda 21. Secondly, the contribution of non-governmental organisations both in the Preparatory Committee meetings leading up to the Rio conference and in the conference itself has substantially altered the contents of Agenda 21 to deal with concerns that may have never been identified or voiced without their participation.

Throughout the Rio conference, NGO pressure groups kept up their inputs either as members of their country's official delegations or from the Global Forum which was a parallel summit of NGOs where some of the deepest concerns of the ordinary citizens of the world were voiced.

However, the vague mapping out of future course for the earth is simply not enough. Even 20 years ago at the first environment conference in Stockholm, the UN called for a 0.7 per cent of GNP from the developed world as a target of ODA assistance for environmental programmes. The scandalous reluctance of the US to be drawn into a commitment for aid provided a bad example for some European nations like Great Britain and Germany who made statements committing themselves to an ultimate 0.7 per cent of GNP but refused to target a date for their aid despite pressures from France and the Scandinavian countries to be more generous and specific. A torrent of criticism of the US role in the conference was inevitable as the Bush Administration appeared sharply divided in terms of political perceptions and ideology. Its preoccupation with domestic problems in an election year left it isolated and utterly marginalised. There was no question then of even any pretext of environmental leadership from the US, in the global context. It refused to sign the treaty on biological diversity saying that it did not protect the biotechnology interests of private research laboratories in the North, and it insisted on a watered down convention on climate change by saying that "jobs at home" had to be protected above global environmental concerns.

The disappointment over targets and time-tables was a matter of deep concern to many who had hoped for much more from the Summit. The eminent scientist, Dr M.S. Swaminathan, said that the conventions are disappointing in that they postpone firm decisions. In an interview with *The Hindu*, Dr Swaminathan pointed out that the conference of parties who will effect the final binding process of the conventions is to be convened within a year which, in his view, is very late. The text of the treaties also talks about 'mutually agreed' terms, said Dr Swaminathan who fears that there will be scope for pressure when it comes to bilateral agreements in areas such as Intellectual Property Rights. 'The unspecified financial resources are also unlikely to take the programmes very far,' said Dr Swaminathan. He argued that Agenda 21 is too much like a big shopping list and had not focussed enough on the five major issues—poverty (only referred to in chapter 3 without prioritisation of action), population stabilisation, pollution and public policy for action. Although the Rio conference was an important exercise in global public awakening, it is not specific and integrated enough in its programme, said Dr Swaminathan. The richest 20 per cent of the world enjoy 82.7 per cent of the income and the poorest 20 per cent have only 1.4 per cent of the global income and these are the odds that we have to contend against, he added.

The other serious drawback to forging a new partnership among nations is the inherent failure at the UNCED to address the basic issues of power structure and international relations, especially in economic terms. At a panel discussion in the NGO global Forum on "Who controls the world after UNCED: the World Bank and the IMF, a restructured UN or the people?" during the Rio conference, participants agreed that much of what was done or agreed to in the UNCED will be negated by the Uruguay Round of the GATT. Anil Aggarwal, Director of the Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi, who was also a member of the Indian delegation to the Summit, said that the World Bank and the IMF were operating in the Third World in such a way that these countries were forced to open their markets to the transnational corporations and 'enormous destabilisation' was occurring through their structural adjustment policies and the devaluation of currencies in these countries. Aggarwal said that the developing countries were in effect becoming the bonded labour of the North. Walden Bellow of the Philippines pointed out that some 70 countries of the South were under the Bank's influence through its structural adjustment loans. In India the interest of transnationals in the food industry is, for example, a worrying trend. And the main areas of interest for the North are drugs, pharmaceuticals, agriculture (including seeds and gene banks), GATT and IPR, and the Earth Summit did not focus enough on these matters.

Further, the Global Environment Facility which is to be the organisation that will disburse funds for environment projects worldwide is to be jointly administered by the UNDP, UNEP and the World Bank. Although at Rio promises were made about the early restructuring of the GEF (following its Washington meeting two months ago) and for democratic decision-making, there remains a great deal of scepticism about its potential role in financial disbursement to the Third World nations. The connections between unfair international trade practices, protectionism in the North, aid packages and loans are only too obvious but did not merit adequate attention at the Summit.

Food security and poverty were not also specifically addressed by the Summit although rhetoric on these abounded in documents and speeches. The issue of consumption patterns was also given the go-by and the same broad-principle treatment at the Summit. Although the Kuala Lumpur meeting of the South

(Continued on page 35)

Rio and New Order

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

What is the message that has come from Rio? The massive gathering at the Earth Summit with the unprecedented turnout of various denominations of activists from all parts of the world, gave it a truly global character which no other international gathering of the past could claim.

This was really the occasion for designing at least the contours of any new world order. And it was precisely on this occasion that the President of the United States emergedas a pathetic figure, standing in icy-cold isolation before the entire comity of nations. President Bush talked of the leadership role of his country in the world of today, and yet he could command neither moral respect nor political authority in the biggest worldwide gathering of the century.

It would be a mistake to look upon the Rio Summit as a demonstration of North-South polarisation. One has to take into account the tremendous role played in the struggle in defence of global environment and against pollution by millions upon millions of activists and scientists and a host of concerned citizens in the developed countries of the North. In fact, it is their unrelenting pressure which contributed in considerable measure towards getting their governments respond to the challenges that the rest of humankind posed at Rio. Even in the USA, a very large body of informed opinion has been asserting more and more against the fearsome consequences of unbridled consumerism which pollutes environment with utter profiligacy.

The isolation of President Bush at the Earth Summit was, therefore, not just a question of his country's imperious-veto on the needs of the Third World or even its failure to carry along with it the allied governments of the North. President Bush stood like a symbol of a bygone world order that has no future, it represents the empty narcissism of today which shall not last tomorrow. One is reminded of the vainglory, the arrogance and the venality that gripped the Roman Empire before its decline and fall. The glory of the sunset is the precursor of the darkness of the night.

It would be juvenile to have expected that at Rio all the resources for protecting the planet would be readily forthcoming, that the polluter would pay without a murmur, that the Bush Administration would readily open its purse-strings and undertake to compensate for cornering the largest chunk of natural resources that the USA consumes to keep up its unsustainable growth. What President Mahatir of Malaysia had demanded no doubt set the tone at Rio, but nobody with a sense of realism would claim that the war could be won by one single battle. The fight has to go on, bitter, protracted fight for the protection of the globe as a whole. To expect a predator to emerge overnight as the protector amounts to infantile day-dreaming.

What has been achieved at Rio is that the problem of environment has come to be recognised as central to saving this earth—not just the warning of a distant apocalyapse, but inscribed on the agenda of this day and age. Chernobyl and Bhopal stand as symbols of mass destruction in our times, and they must not happen again anywhere.

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THIS brings us face to face with a basic question of this century. Advance in the field of science and technology poses a challenge of contraries—on the one hand, it marks triumph of the human genius, and on the other, threat to the human species itself. If the splitting of the atom was a revolutionary achievement of human ingenuity, Hiroshima appeared as the symbol of ultimate annihilation. Here is the interface of *Shiva* and *Rudra*, what Marx would have called the interplay of dialectics. Technology can certainly be a good servant but a bad master for humanity.

The experience of the nuclear threat brings out this dilemma. What Hiroshima signified is the arrival of a weapon in human hand which threatens the very person or country that uses it. All other weapons of war in the past could destroy a target, the enemy, but the nuclear bomb has shown that it threatens to destroy its user as well. And yet two powerful establishments in the twentieth century went on stockpiling this weapon, the more advanced, the more lethal varieties of it, for full four decades, until they both had to declare, as Gorbachev and Reagan did at the superpower summit in Geneva in 1983, that the nuclear war cannot be won and must not be fought.

If the nuclear war cannot be won, then why go on spending billions on it? Why President Bush who could not underwrite his country's financial obligation for saving the planet at Rio, should go on sanctioning much larger spending on nuclear weapons armoury for his country and its allies? Because, the mystique of nuclear weapon is kept up as a symbol of military power—not its use, but the threat to use it to browbeat others. That is why there is such strenuous pressure by big powers on India and Pakistan not to have the bomb, while there is no move to destroy their own stockpiles of the same nuclear weapons. Here is a case of a twentieth century voodoo while the gifts of science and technology perfected in the laboratories and factories of these very countries offer the promise of a pollution-free planet, endowed with an environment that shall sustain the full flowering of the humankind.

Precisely in this context one has to place Indira Gandhi's warning at Stockholm in 1972 that poveerty poses the greatest threat to environment. To keep the majority of humankind in a state of poverty and deprivation so that the developed countries of the North can corner all the gifts of natural resources and indulge in reckless pollution of the earth and the atmosphere above, is the road to certain extermination of the human race. The ghastly imbalance between the Have and the Have-not, between the affluent North and the deprived South, militates against the very law of nature apart from the sheer immorality of it.

What is more important is that such a grotesque design of human society even if it is sought to be established, is by no means realisable in today's world in which the downtrodden are no longer the dumb driven cattle but have awakened and are becoming more and more articulate. Herein lies a byproduct of the advance of productive forces. A serf with the plough could be kept in a state of utter ignorance, but a skilled worker in a factory has to be a literate; and today in the technological age, the person at the computer has to be educated. With each advance in the productive forces, knowledge has to be imparted in growing measure, and with knowledge comes the awakening of the human spirit which in the final analysis can never be enchained.

This is not just emotional wishful thinking, but is borne out by the inexorable march of history. The angry outburst at Rio at the vulgar demonstration of the affluence of the developed North can only act as a spur for the South to assert and secure its freedom from impoverishment. The urge for social justice cannot be smothered by the lords of the North celebrating the demise of Soviet communism.

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RIO imposes a tremendous responsibility on a country like ours. Our Prime Minister was right in pointing out at the Earth Summit the linkage between development and environment. There can never be sustained development by destroying the environment, nor can the environment be protected with the world's majority kept in a state of penury and underdevelopment.

We have to go deeper and point to the fact that the model of development that the North has adopted—insatiable grabbing of the world's resources and ever increasing consumption of energy, is not only resulting in the frightening depletion of the natural resources but is directly vitiating the environment and leading the humankind towards its very extinction. Science has discerned the evil effects of this model of development pursued since the Industrial Revolution.

Here comes our specific responsibility. The model of development we adopted after independence was the one set by the Industrial Revolution—industrialisation based on the building of heavy industry. The Nehru-Mahalanobis model was precisely that. Many have attacked it as being based on the Soviet model because it provided for a public sector. But public sector as such has nothing to do with socialism. In a developing economy, when there is scarcity of capital accumulation in private hands, the state has had to intervene. The British built the railways and the postal system in a state sector in India as part of the colonial economy—not that they were laying the foundations of socialism.

In the conventional sense, the Nehru model enabled the Indian economy to overcome the devastation left behind by the colonial raj and to get on to the road of rapid development. Where it really failed was on the question of eliminating, at least minimising, poverty. Growth of the economy has been accompanied by the widening of the gap between the affluent and the impoverished, and not the other way round. And poverty does not mean only the question of hunger: with it is linked illiteracy, malnutrition and social inequity in the wider sense. All these contribute to environmental degradation which is writ large over the map of India.

The fight for environment is thus linked up with the striving for a new model of development. In fact, the entire concept of development pursued since the Industrial Revolution is under fire on a worldwide scale, and there is absolutely no reason for us to hold on to that model. When Manmohan Singh and his company of learned economists talk of globalising the

Indian economy, they think in terms of that old model of development. In our planning process, in the thinking of the leadership of our political parties, the same worn-out concept of development persists: for them all, environment is just a side issue, not central to development.

It is here, on this crucial issue, that our economists, our social scientists, our engineers and planners have to rethink and rethink hard, to develop our own model which will combine the absorption of technology with the imperatives of social justice and protection of environment. Technology, if wisely harnessed, can protect environment and not destroy it, and can go a long way towards ensuring social justice. Narasimha Rao's repeated emphasis on harnessing solar energy is an example of such a possibility. But it is no longer a question of executing a solitary technology. The entire vista of a new regime of development has to be worked out. That would not only save our motherland but inspire the Third World as well.

Here is the path that Rio beckons for our nation—for our government as also for all those who are tirelessly striving for a better India in a better world. ■

EARTH SUMMIT

Rio blazes a New Trail

O.P. SABHERWAL

Important as the road to Rio has been, what matters more is the road from Rio. This observation of President Bush at the Earth Summit lends itself to diverse interpretations about the American role in preparation of the Summit and during the UNCED itself. The fact is that the road to Rio was pretty bumpy; the road from Rio should provide a more hopeful vista.

When the Earth Summit commenced on June 3, predictions about its outcome differed widely. This, the greatest Summit of nations, could change the world, could save the Earth, or be a disaster of global proportions. Such widely differing assessments emerged from the nature of the challenge itself, a challenge on the environmental front related to the interaction of man with nature over the last 150 years, which questioned the modern industrial-technological impact on the Earth's ecosystem.

On the other hand, the eve-of-Summit posture of North-South confrontation lent a new dimension to the problems that this great gathering of nations was faced with. And yet the Earth Summit has witnessed a forward thrust by the participating nations. Instead of confrontation and breakdown, the UNCED has witnessed the emergence of North-South cooperation and a programme of joint action though nations maintain reservations and their singular point of view in many instances, and gaps remain in the environment programme, Agenda 21.

The balance-sheet of the Rio Summit, participated in by as many as 115 heads of state and government, is positive all along the line notwithstanding the acrimony and debate packed in 12 days' intensive deliberations. The instruments and documentation emerging from the UNCED have clearer, better defined objectives and perspectives, backed by a plan of action, such as no international summit of this magnitude has produced.,

At the same time, there is no use glossing over the issues on which the North and South clashed and their interests and viewpoint were sharply at variance. The point is what are the processes that brought about the change? And what is the panoramic view of national positions on key issues that has emerged?

During the preparatory stage of the Summit the issues on which the North-South cleavage was projecting itself could clearly by seen. Forestry and funding appeared to be on top. The plan of action was being pulled and pushed by the two sides to suit their respective interests. And as regards the two conventions—or treaties as the Americans describe them—the Convention on Climatic Change and Convention on Biological Diversity, there were key points on which the North and South differed. The North avoided a deadline being placed in the action plan on cutting down of carbon dioxide and other pollutants' emissions in their countries causing the maximum damage to the ecoystem. But compromise and mutual accommodation prevailed and a broadly

The author, who is the Chief Editor of India Press Agency covered the Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro.

acceptable draft of the Convention on Climatic Change emerged on the eve of the Summit. But as for the Convention on Biodiversity, the US maintained a posture of insulation. However, on the eve of the UNCED's commencement a proposal emerged to avoid any mishap and serious deadlock by adopting a 27-point Rio Declaration largely based on principles acceptable to all.

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WHEN the conference commenced on June 3, at the outset what came to the fore is the Convention on Biological Diversity on which countries of the North were lukewarm and the United States categoric in its refusal to sign the Convention. Simultaneously, other differences projected themselves: on forestry and funding, for instance.

In retaliation to the US refusal to sign the Biodiversity Convention, countries of the G-77 group posed the weakness of the Convention on Climatic Change. The Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahatir Mohammad, said there was no use signing a document which put no deadline on its operative action, namely, cutting down of emission of CO_2 and other pollutants in industrial countries of the North. These initial postures of confrontation however witnessed a great turnaround with the leading developed countries parting company with the United States on the Biodiversity Convention.

On by one, all the leading industrial nations—Germany and Japan being the foremost followed by France and Britain—lined up to sign the Convention on Biological Diversity creating an atmosphere of US isolation at the Earth Summit. What is more, all these leading countries of the North elevated their decision by ensuring that the document was signed personally by the heads of government or state—Chancellor Kohl, President Mitterand and Prime Minister John Major. The Japanese Prime Minister, Kiichi Miyazawa, though he could not come over to the Earth Summit, nevertheless signed the Convention by a special satellite relay.

This was a signal for change in the Conference leading to a mellowing down of confrontationist postures and paving the way for compromise on key issues.

It was the forestry question that flared up next despite the changed atmosphere in the Conference. The initial American position was to have a convention or treaty which in effect would globalise the forest wealth of the South, their main resource and asset. In lieu, the Americans offered money for upkeep of forests in India, Brazil, Malaysia, etc. and other countries of the South. The American woodlands in Texas and other states were, however, to kept out of the treaty's purview on the plea of these being private assets, as against tropical forests being government-owned.

However, the South put up determined opposition to the US move which had backing from other the countries of the North. "The US finds it more profitable to have forests in India than in Texas," India's Environment and Forestry Minister, Kamal Nath, told this correspondent. It was Kamal Nath's dogged fight with support from the entire G-77 group that turned the tables. The upshot was the adoption of Principles on Forestry unanimously by the Conference. These golden principles on Forestry unanimously by the Conference.

The mood of give and take found its expression in the matter of funding. The important thing is that the South won its principled stand unreservedly, namely, that pollution is mainly the upshot of the North's actions and it is the North that must pay for the clean-up. Secondly, that environment protection has to go hand in hand with the South's development plans. They are co-related. On this score it is Japan and Germany who have led the movement for a change of stance in the North. This occasioned a banter from President Bush who complained that while his Western partners were lavish in making promises, America believed in action.

However, Japan and Germany have not lagged behind in 'action' either and have stolen a march over US. The Japanese Prime Minister has already announced an ODA commitment of 7.7 billion dollars for Agenda 21 programme implementation. It is true, however, that Japan has maintained a low-profile in the conference deliberations, taking only constructive postures, and especially avoiding Bush baiting, which directly or indirectly had at one stage in the conference become a sort of fashion. It is this that won great applause for President Castro when he took his seat in the heads of state deliberations.

Consequently, the United States has to an extent wilted under the many-sided pressures on its leadership on the environmental front. Though President Bush has yet refused to sign the Biodiversity Convention, he has nevertheless called the Earth Summit a "truly historic gathering" and promised to step up American funding in environmental programmes by 66 per cent. However, while the US went to the UNCED asserting its leadership role in the world today, the US President has emerged from Rio visibly reduced in stature and height.

The Conference should be seen as having altered the global lay-out in the North-South configuration. While overall, the Summit represents a signal upswing for the South, if not a victory, the major countries of the North, with Germany and Japan playing the leadership role, have changed the pattern of North-South interaction. Is this an indication of shape of things to come in the comity of industrialised nations? Viewed thus, Prime Minister Li Peng's remark that the UNCED "will turn a new page in the world history of environmental protection and development" may not be over-optimistic.

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TAKING an overview, some notable facets of the Rio Summit have already emerged, while its long-range impact will crystallise over a period of time.

First and foremost, the major environmental problems, hitherto ignored, have been pushed to the top of the world agenda. Alongwith issues of economics of the nations and their security concerns, environment now ranks as a top global issue.

As Dr Swaminathan, the noted agro-scientist, told this writer, after Rio the consciousness of the world had been roused over environmental issues. That is an attainment of the Rio Summit.

Two: In a sense, UNCED has set in motion new pressures on the rich, which even the mighty US cannot afford to ignore. The compromises which the American stand on crucial issues—from biodiversity to forestry and funding—had to undergo at Rio in the course of the 12 days of gruelling debate is a testimony. In its concluding phase, the Summit threw up a rising crescendo of accords on all but three issues. These were forestry, funding of Agenda 21 and atmospheric pollution, all of which were tackled on the penultimate day of the Conference in a spirit of give and take.

If the developing nations realised the need for rapport with developed nations on the quantum of funds which the rich could muster, the rich nations on their part accepted the vital fact that the industrialised nations have through the past century and a half of industrialisation made most of the pollution and environmental degradation now threatening the planet. And it is the rich who have to pay for the action programme evolved by UNCED.

Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, among others, accepted this point explicity, while even the United States did not deny this basic reality.

The third vital lesson was that development and poverty alleviation had to go hand in hand with environmental cleaning. There was realisation that interdependence and interaction of nations of the North and the South needed compromise to accommodate each other's concerns.

It was in this spirit that the contentious issue of forestry development was resolved. While the US had set out by asking for a treaty on forestry, it had to rest content with a set of Principles on Forestry which incorporated the viewpoint of the developing nations as well. Forests are now not seen as merely carbon dioxide sinks—to absorb the pollution largely created by the North—but are recognised as resources and assets of the nations possessing them. The veiled bid to limit the sovereign rights of the nations of the South over forests has been defeated.

The issue of funding was similarly resolved. The Indian point of view was that the big developed nations should not merely accept the principle of funding but should commit themselves over the quantums within specific time-frames, As Environment Minister Kamal Nath said, hitherto what the rich had accepted was only a "statement of intent", not a specific plan of committed funding. He expected the increment in ODA funding to be raised from 50 billion dollars to 75 billion dollars. The Third World nations represented by the Group of 77 were able to ensure that aid administered by the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) would have no new conditionalities.

The fourth important upshot at Rio was that the developing nations found the confidence and strength to project their point of view effectively. The Rio Summit has been unique in this sense. The consensus of the developing nations at Rio was the force—India, China, Brazil and Malaysia were its storm-troopers—which changed the complexion of the UNCED. In a way, the India-China commonality of approach provided the core. India by its dogged and persistent work on behalf of the developing nations enhanced its stature during the Conference.

Finally, the package of Conventions, Rio Declaration and Agenda 21 emerging from the Summit lays a good basis for advance in the environmental field, both as path-setting documents and an action plan. The sceptics feel that that these bulky documents—Agenda 21 is a 400-page compendium of four volumes—lack the bite and sharp thrust. However, it would be wrong to oversimplify the environmental problems of the planet and the practical way forward that the nations have to evolve. As one specialist said, these instruments will over a period of time develop teeth that will bite.

Prime Minister Narasimha Rao made the point forcefully when he said in his inaugural speech that the environment issues pose not a one-time task, but a process which has been launched at Rio. ■

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Current Political Situation

SOE MYINT

Ever since it took over power on September 18, 1988, the military government (SLORC) has committed, without any let-up, political represssion, human rights violations and has shown callous disregard of the wishes of the Burmese people. Not only did it not transfer power to the National League for Democracy (NLD) which won the elections held on May 27, 1990; on the contrary, it unleashed political repression such as detention of the Opposition political leaders including the NLD General Secretary, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, arrest of many members of parliment on trumped-up charges and revocation of their MP status as well as abolition of the officially registered political parties. In addition, the SLORC heightened its military offensive against the ethnic minority rebels leading to the expansion of the on-going civil war in the country. This resulted in the exodus of lakhs of refugees into countries bordering on Burma, namely, Thailand, India, Bangladesh and China.

Internally the SLORC's abuse of human rights include total curtailment of freedom of expression and political activity. Such SLORC behaviour has increasingly worsened with each passing day and has reached a stage where international organisations, human rights groups and foreign governments have also raised the level of their criticism and censure. On February 27, 1992 the United Nations Social and Economic Council adopted a resolution which condemned the SLORC and called for punitive action. The European Parliment as well as the Australian Parliament have strongly condemned violations of human rights and political repression by the SLORC. The United Nations also sent independent experts to inquire into the allegation of human rights abuses in Burma. The ASEAN countries too have hardened their attitude towards the SLORC in the wake of the forcible exodus of Muslim refugees to Bangladesh. Lastly, the governments of Norway and Switzerland have officially recognised the Burmese pro-democracy forces and have given their support and assistance to the latter.

The author is one of the two Burmese students who hijacked a Thai plane to Calcutta on November 10, 1990 in a bid to draw international attention to the cause of restoration of democracy in Burma.

Thus, in order to distract from this heightened condemnation and censure by international organisations and foreign governments and also to preempt any possible sanction by the United Nations Security Council, the SLORC has embarked on a course of deceiving and hoodwinking the Burmese people and the international community.

To recount some of the more significant actions of the SLORC from among the political initiatives it had undertaken since April 23, 1992, it would be necessary to mention the selective release of a few political prisoners including the former Prime Minister, U Nu, the SLORC's stated intention to enter into talks with Opposition political parties within two months and to hold a national convention within six months; and its declaration of a unilateral, temporary ceasefire in its military offensive against Karen rebels in the border areas.

To the casual observer, it would seem that these activities of the SLORC are geared towards the re-flowering of democracy in the country and cessation of the civil war, and therefore, positive moves. People who do not have a deep knowledge of the country or who have not personally experienced the methods employed by the army to keep the country under their control for thirty years would tend to adopt an optimistic attitude.

We need to study the SLORC's recent political moves very carefully. For instance, in the matter of release of political prisoners, it is a selective one involving a few persons. If we have to go by past experience, it is most likely that the releases were made after the SLORC got the assurances it wanted from them either through coercion or material inducements. If the SLORC is really sincere in its intentions then Burma's national leader, Daw Aung San Sui Kyi, and all other political and student leaders should be released without exception and without any precondition. As Daw Aung San Sui Kyi, winner of the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize, is esteemed as their national leader by the people of Burma, the very fact that her release has not been ordered by the SLORC means that the regime, which has always ignored the wishes of the people, is also not sincere in its intentions in this particular instance from among its many insincere actions.

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IN the matter of talking with the Opposition political parties within two months, it would most likely turn out to be discussions with the parties which support the SLORC, including the National Unity Party (NUP), and with those parties which the SLORC can control and browbeat into submission. Prior to the 1990 elections, there were 235 officially registered political parties in the country. Out of them, only 93 parties were allowed to contest the elections. Even these parties were subsequently either requested to withdraw their registration or forcibly abolished till, at present, only ten officially registered parties are left. These ten parties include the NUP (formerly the BSPP) and three other parties allied to it. Another party still remaining as an officially registered party is the rudderless NLD whose whole leadership is in jail for criticising the SLORC. Therefore, one can conclude that the SLORC's intention is to talk only with the parties which it can manipulate at will.

Regarding the national convention proposed by the SLORC and which is to be held within six months, it is nothing more than a ploy. The SLORC, through inducements and offer of ceasefire, made peace with drug traffickers (like the "Wa" insurgents) and some elements of the traitorous, self-centred ethnic minority rebels and intends to send them to attend the proposed national convention as ethnic minority leaders. Also, the selection of delegates to the aforementioned national convention is entirely in the hands of the SLORC and it proposes to eliminate the pro-democracy forces outside the country as well as those of the internal opposition as possible delegates. In addition, a national convention, according to its nature, should be openly debated and reflect the wishes of the people. The SLORC, however, negates both these aspects by still adhering to its policy of curbing all political activities and also prohibiting freedom of expression, and filtering all publication through the censorship of the still-in-force martial law. The SLORC's real reason for holding a national convention is the realisation of its untenable position by the verdict of the May 1990 polls. Subsequently, it began talking again about holding a national convention in order to gain time to consolidate itself and achieve a position of control over events. This ploy also serves to beguile the Burmese and international public.

The SLORC's declaration of a unilateral ceasefire against the Karen rebels is nothing more than an insincere and hypocritical measure. The SLORC previously had plans to overrun the Manerplaw headquarters of the Karens at the latest by March 27, 1992. But, after making determined assaults, the SLORC had to concede defeat. The possible fallouts from this crushing humiliation are decline in the morale within the army, insurbordination, largescale desertion, and cracks in the army leadership. To prevent these, the SLORC declared a unilateral ceasefire. The SLORC's present willingness to accept back the Muslim refugees who fled to Bangladesh is also designed to neutralise the criticism and condemnation from the ASEAN countries, previously the SLORC's main supporters, concerning the treatment and plight of these Muslim refugees.

If the SLORC leaders are really sincere at heart and would like to honour and respect the wishes of the people and work for the good of the country, they could simply hand over power to the members of parliament who won in the elections of May 27, 1990. Then, a government formed with these members of parliament could subsequently tackle the tasks of bringing to an end the civil war and forging peace in the country, holding of a national convention and drafting of a new constitution. As long as the SLORC refrains from taking this desireable course of action, which also accords with the earnest wishes of the people, its other actions are merely moves to hoodwink the Burmese people and the international community while consolidating its hold on power. Therefore, in conclusion, I would like to appeal to the people of the world, international organisations and foreign governments not to lessen, in any way, the momentum of their support and assistance to the Burmese pro-democracy forces, and I would also like to call upon the latter to maintain the present momentum in their struggle for democracy. ■

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Foreign Investor and TU Bashing

JAYSHREE SENGUPTA

As India liberalises its economic policy and undertakes social reforms, it places hopes on foreign investors coming in droves to a land which we view as ideally suited for foreign investment. We have cheap labour and local raw materials and skilled personnel.

But today the happening in industrial countries, specially in Western Europe, are such that the likely investors are looking for certain types of host countries rather than just cheap and skilled labour. They want no more trouble from trade unions because despite the fact that in most European countries the union membership has declined over the past decade, trade unions have become active again. Crippling strikes have been paralysing countries like Germany and despite the decline in socialism, trade unions are playing havoc.

Recently due to the strike by the public services workers, mountains of garbage accumulated in the streets of western Germany inviting rats in the otherwise impeccable streets. The public services may have lost one billion Deutschmark (DM) or more because of the strike and the private industry also lost because employees were unable to reach work on account of transit disruptions. Trains, buses and planes at airport came to a half. The governemnt was forced to agree to a 5.4 per cent wage increase up from previous offer of 4.7 per cent. It also agreed to make one-time payments to compensate for the time that has elapsed since the previous contracts expired at the end of last year. The higher wages take effect retroactively from May 1 for low-paid jobs and from June 1 for higher-paid workers. The government has already had to pay 16 billion DM to OEVT Union (public sector employees) before they agreed to end the strike.

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UNLIKE the other European countries, Germany's trade union penetration of the labour force has not changed much over the last 20 years and remains at 40 per cent. Trade unions appear to be strong enough to continue agitating and during the 1980s the powerful I. G. Metall, (metal workers' union) managed to get for its members the highest wages and shortest working week in the world which also accounts for Germany's highest unit labour cost. Seeing the success of the public sector strike the I.G. Metall, which is the largest union, decided to go on strike asking for 9.5 per cent rise in wages. They argue that their claim has to be higher than that of the public sector workers who, according to their standards, are unproductive. The success of such claims will soon determine the fate of Germany's economic prosperity.

On the other hand, Germany's model of labour co-determination in boardroom decisions has helped to make German plants more efficient through close cooperation between workers and management.

Germany's private sector today faces the risk of higher taxes at a time when the costs of reunification between eastern and western Germany are already burdening its economy. The feat is that now the other strong trade unions in the country will also stage strikes in the next few weeks.

All over Europe, strikes are taking place demanding higher wages or protesting against budget cuts. In Netherlands, the metal workers' union went on strike against management plans to reduce sick pay and, in Belgium, in the town of Liege, policemen went on a hunger strike against budget cuts. Spanish labour unions had set a series of work stoppages beginning with a half day general strike to protest cuts in unemployment benefits which are part of Spain's efforts to converge with European Community (EC) and is one of the criteria for the proposed monetary union. France has experienced a 22-day strike last October from the public sector's Renault car factory workers and in Italy, around the same time, three big trade unions staged a general strike lasting several hours to protest budget cuts. They are now gearing up for another strike to demand higher wage scales.

European unions have more statutory entitlements than their brethren in the United Kingdom or the United States because European unions are supported within Europe's social market economics by big social welfare nets, job protection laws and labour co-determination. The Forum of European Trade Unions met in Prague recently where about 130 union leaders gathered and declared, "The message that should emerge from this conference is that an economic and industrial policy without a social and environmental dimension is bound to fail even as regards economy and industry.”

But now with an expanding EC, will trade unions wield as much clout? Unless the unions can unify policies in time for a single European market at the end of 1992, union aggression will become increasingly self-defeating. It may be good news for the neighbouring East European countries where many industires from Germany and France are already moving out at the rate of 10,000 jobs a year. Only the UK, under Mrs Thatcher, was successful in bashing the unions by ending their monopolies or closed shops. Membership also declined when non-union member wages were higher than the union-scale wages. Also in Britain, without Labour government in power for so many years, unions have lost their influence over national policies and have been reduced to cutting separate deals with individual plants.

Britain has insisted on an opt-out clause on the Maastricht Treaty for the European Monetary Union primarily due to its objections social convergence which would lay down rules for labour's working conditions, minimum wages etc. Britain still remains one of the lowest labour cost countries in Europe and has been able to attract American and Japanese investments. Britain will lose its attractiveness if it harmonised with the rest of the EC.

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IT is true that European industrialists are looking for places to relocate their industry in countries which have highly skilled but union-free labour. And they are going to East European countries, China, Mexico and even Russia. In their times, European and American capital sought and found similar trouble-free settings in Indonesia and South Korea where unions were much under control and not allowed to make demands. For many potential investors, it is important not only to offer tax incentives and higher rates of earning on foreign equity capital but it is equally important to assure them that the labour is disciplined and under control.

Foreign investors do not wish to encounter the same problems in India which they are facing at home. In spite of all the strikes and unrest, the highly productive labour of Germany and technically advanced labour in other countries of Europe will remain attractive to high-tech industries. To attract the investors to India, we have to compete with the Europeans, not just in profitability and productivity but also by assuring them of more amenable and strife-free atmosphre by successfully bashing trade unions? Is this even possible in the present state of our politics? Is it even desirable in our democracy, committed to social justice? ■

(Courtesy: *Indian Express*)

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Mainstream *(August 10, 1991) carried an article by Girilal Jain ("The Past and the Future") and invited readers to a discussion on its contents. Some contributions have been carried in the* Mainstream *issues of September 28, 1991 and December 21, 1991. Here the author, who is involved in work among the landless in the Banda district of UP, presents an essay on nation-building while participating in the debate and offers several thought-provoking observations. It is being carried in two instalments on account of its length. The first part appeared in* Mainstream *(June 20, 1992) This is the concluding part.* —Editor

Is BJP the Party of the Future? — II

An Essay on Nation-building

LALIT UNIYAL

The real difficulty with the BJP is that it is not a product of the Renaissance and reform movements, nor of the Freedom Struggle. It is an outgrowth of an emotional and irrationalist tendency first manifested in the RSS. Whenever it speaks of any of the Renaissance figures, this is done for emotional appeal rather than for logical compatibility with the BJP's own philosophy.

It is shocking and alarming to see a universal sage like Vivekananda being sought to be reduced to *Hindutva* proportions by the RSS and BJP. He was one of our great modernisers who strove to reconcile the Indian religious tradition with secular and socialist humanism. His great Guru, Ramakrishna, had practised and experienced the truth of all religions, and the insistence on the truth of each and every religion is a central and unwavering message of Vivekananda. He wished to see the triumph of truth in all religions, and not the victory of one religion over another And his social teaching is succintly expressed in the words he uttered towards the end of Nivedita. "Remember", he had said, "the message is: Women and the Masses."

Gandhiji had clearly indicated that for him swaraj meant not so much Independent India as liberated Indians. Vivekananda, whom I have quoted in the early part of this essay, had said that the first step to be a patriot was to be restless and concerned for the poor and he held every man to be a traitor who did not pay heed to them. It is this humanistic patriotism that the BJP lacks but seeks to conceal behind its mysticism of Mother India. And it is this absence of compassion that makes it relatively indifferent to the poor, and unsympathetic to the whole tradition of socialist thought. The collapse of communism is being rather facilely treated by it as a victory of capitalism. It is in fact a defeat of authoritarianism and a victory of the open-ended but difficult search for a better society. Communism was only the most immediately successful but not the best nor most idealistic representative of socialism. For there is also a socialism that is less concerned with the capture of state power and more truly rooted in moral and cultural transformations, one for which the critical activity of the masses is the centre and the institutional structure the periphery—and not the other way round as it has been with communism.

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BUT the criticism of the BJP does not end here. Because it is not a product of the Indian Renaissance but is an outgrowth of an irrationalist tendency (that is, fears and hatreds), it is not even properly representative of the indigenous culture of the country. It goes by the letter and the forms, and its conceptions have an unmistakeable woodenness about them. This is because it does not grasp and has nothing to do with the spiritual essence of the religious and philosophical traditions of India. The spiritual is not something mysterious or imaginary, it is the sense of oneness pervading all. Its natural effect and expression

Note : The quotations in the first part of this article, carried on pages 19 and 22 in Mainstream (June 20, 1982), are from Rebuild India by Swami Vivekananda.

is to make one rise above self-centredness and to see and seek the union and brotherhood of man. It is the one source of all that tends towards universality in our culture and it alone accounts for the large sympathies and the recurrent synthetical tendency of Indian civilisation. Universality is not the imposition of a single idea or belief upon all but the tendency of a culture to produce men who can sympathetically enter into other traditions, return enriched and help enlarge their own. Those who cannot see the entire human enterprise as one interconnected whole tend towards narrow exclusiveness and petty conflicts. This is the character of Muslim fundamentalism, and his is the character that the BJP seeks to give to those whom it calls Hindu.

It is of course all to the good that problems which were hypocritically suppressed so far should have come out into the open. For, as in psycho-analysis integration of the personality becomes possible only when repressed problems are consciously acknowledged, so also in social life acknowledging repressed problems is a necessary step towards their resolution. Indeed the gravity of these problems of identity is less alarming than the absence of serious and fair-minded reflection upon them. What really is cause for alarm is the mechanical habit of our intellectuals of resorting to partisan polemics according to a set and entirely predictable pattern, just as the cuckoo in the old clock calls out thrice at three o'clock and goes back and remains silent until the hour strikes again. It is here that the real weakness of our society is manifested. I see it every other day in the village that, whenever there is a problem, various individuals and groups immediately take up positions to settle their old scores with each other, but no one thinks of the interests of the village as a whole. This drama of uneducated villagers is witnessed on the grand national stage too where, to the drum-beats of newspapers, the farce of the village is re-enacted as the tragedy of the nation.

The BJP has successfully posed the problem of Muslim fundamentalism in India, but in doing so it may also have succeeded in posing the problem of its own narrowness. It is too obsessively and negatively concerned with the Muslims and does not appear to be seeking a modern identity for the country, except in the purely external sense that it wants India to be a powerful nation respected by the world at large. But strength comes from the satisfaction experienced by the individuals and groups constituting the nation and from the social cohesion resulting from this fact. The BJP, on the other hand, insists that individuals and groups should in the first place be willing to sacrifice themselves for the greatness of the nation and be happy merely to be able to partake in that greatness. It is the consciousness of this patently illiberal and authoritarian tendency that underlies the fear of liberals that it may eventually turn out to be a fascist party.

A nation can be built only upon the foundation of a felt spiritual unity in its members. Such unity cannot be attained by force, nor by the mysticism of Mother India. The violence and artificiality of such unity will make it crumble at the first opportunity. The old Indian method was to work deeper, more slowly and solidly, in the hearts and minds of the people; and whatever civilisational unity we possess today is due to our religious reformers and thinkers, *sants* and *pirs*, poets and wandering minstrels. To these time-tested methods we should no doubt add what the modern world provides us—economic integration, federal political union, and education and constructive use of media. But obviously we ought to do nothing to impair the civilisational unity of India. Breaking down mosques can by no stretch of imagination form part of an agenda for unity and nation-building. The the BJP should have seriously taken up such a programme constitutes the severest indictment of its cultural and political thinking.

We have never been nationally and politically homogeneous and one in the sense that the BJP wants us to be. We have always known semi-autonomous families, castes, guilds, villages, towns, religious communities, regional units. The ancient Indian idea of empire, of *cakravartin*, was "a uniting rule that respected every existing regional and communal liberty, that unnecessarily crushed out no living autonomy, that effected a synthesis of her life and not a mechanical oneness".[1] These are not the words of some Leftist historian but of Sri Aurobindo.

Diversities are a part of the problem that we face, and we cannot wish them away. How to find a legitimate place for each of these diversities is a central problem of nation-building in India. Creation, said Tagore, is the harmony of contrary forces. When they join hands all the fire and fight are changed into the smile of flowers and the songs of birds. When, said he, there is only one of them triumphant and the other defeated, then either there is the death of cold rigidity or that of suicidal explosion.[2]

Therefore, rebuilding India is not merely a question of who caputres power and of what he is able to impose. It is essentially a question of building upon and strengthening the roots of our slender civilisational unity. This can be done through the employment of such modern methods as do not go against the grain of our civilisational experience of always seeking synthesis, never suppression.

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NOW as to the specific problem of Muslim fundamentalism posed by the BJP, we need first to ask whether the popular Islam of the masses is fundamentalist. The existence of castes of a sort, saint worship, devotional music, belief in an aura of divinity around Prophet Muhammad, none of these is acceptable to the fundamentalists. However, even if we acknowledge the intellectual dominance of fundamentalism and the consequent possibility of its generating a trend among the Muslim masses, it would only justify our being alert to oppose fundamentalism ideologically and politically. It would not justify ignoring the rights and deeper needs of Muslims. On the contrary, I feel that some sympathy for and understanding of the Muslim predicament is necessary.

Islam embodies two great religious ideas, that of divine governance, and of human equality and brotherhood. Taken in this general form there would be no tension for Islam in the modern world, for it could then be indefinitely supple. But to be a Muslim means the acceptance of the special and unique Prophethood of Muhammad and of the Quran as the Word of God. If you do not accept these latter two, you cannot be a Muslim. *La ilaha illa Muhammadun Rasulu 'Llah.*

I may accept the idea of divine governance and of human brotherhood and equality and yet not be a Muslim because I do not fully and unequivocally accept the Shahadah. But if I had been born into the Muslim tradition, I would have unequivocally accepted the Shahadah and striven constantly to be a true Muslim. How could I have been anything else, and how can a Muslim be any other than a Muslim? I would surely want to be a true Muslim. Why should I be a fake?

But I am also born into the modern age, and I have to live in it and cannot live in any other. I find various peculiar features in the modern world. Everywhere there seems to be current a belief that society can be remodelled or reorganised on the basis of ideas furnished by the growth of human knowledge. This reorganisation is sought not to fulfil the prescriptions of any religion but to satisfy individuals who seek external freedom for themselves for the purpose of eventual inner direction of their lives. And it is not merely men but women too who, seeking equality with men, take this stand. All these changes are sought to be brought into being through the freedom to propagate ideas and to win over a majority whose decisions prevail in the last resort. Moreover, this takes place in a society where we Muslims are in a minority, and we are expected to uphold the interests of that society over and above that of the Islamic brotherhood because of the rights granted to us by that society.

As against these modern tendencies, traditional Islam teaches me that the true community (Islamic) comes into being only with the acceptance of the sovereignty of Allah and that this community cannot be artificially divided by national or geographic boundaries. This community, furthermore, has been provided with a complete and perfect code, the Shariat, for the regulation of the details of individual and social life. This code, and indeed the Quran itself, plainly accords a relatively lower status to women and does not accept their equality with men. From the traditional Islamic point of view, therefore, the task appears to be not to encourage ideas of individual freedom and inner direction, nor of democracy and majority rule, but to implement the Shariat and ensure submission to the will of God.

Modern ideas pull me in one direction, traditional conceptions of Islam in an exactly opposite direction. This is the tension, the problem that Islam faces (and I as an individual Muslim face) in the contemporary world. I can reject the modern world and be Muslim in the traditional sense. Or I can reject Islam and be modern in the non-religious sense. But can I really reject the modern world? Can I really reject Islam? I cannot, I find both rejections impossible. So what do I do? The problem before me is this: how to reconcile an authentic commitment to Islam with secular concerns and genuine secular activism. How to be truly Muslim and yet fully modern? This is the problem.

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THE problem is not unique to Islam. Other religions have faced and, in different ways and to different degrees, resolved this problem. Canonical Law no longer governs Christian society, and Hindu Smritis are not taken seriously by most educated Hindus, revivalists apart. Yet both Hindus and Christians feel that they are able to practice their religions and exist as Hindus and Christians in the contemporary world. This is because a gradual but decisive change has taken place in the conception of religion *within these religious traditions*. The essence of that change is the new and correct understanding that religion is not and does not demand standardised external activities of a religious sort. That indeed is what we should call religionism. Religion, on the other hand, is an opening and a softening of the inner man, a call and a cry for the Divine.

This does not mean that a man's religion gets locked in some secret compartment of his heart and fails to find expression in the outer world. It means, on the contrary, that the external expression of his religion cannot be prescribed in advance but must largely be discovered and determined by the individual himself as being best suited to his authentic inner growth. However, guidance in regard to the inner spirit that he is to maintain in all his activities, and to develop when he is not outwardly active, will come to him chiefly from his particular religion. This implies much greater flexibility in the outer forms of religion. The one thing that, in the modern conception, is definitely not religion is relgionism, the authoritative imposition of external relgious duties upon man; for that frequently sets up tremendous barriers to authentic inner growth and crushes the very spirit that religion is intended to liberate.

The present situation in Islam is that Islamic liberalism is intellectually very weak and Islamic fundamentalism very powerful. The process of secularisation is undeniably in a rudimentary and early stage. What the fundamentalists say is that traditional Islam is sufficient unto itself and that there shall be no secularisation. Paradoxically, this ahistorical view is accepted at face value by the BJP, which believes that secularisation can never be initiated in Islam except by force, as in Turkey. This lack of compassion, and faith in force, is part of the medieval ethos of the BJP. In the contemporary world we witness almost daily the limitations of force and its failure to resolve real problems, especially where masses of people are involved. I do not say that force has no role at all. It does, especially when mass consent is already available and residuary or peripheral resistance is to be set aside. But force is not the instrument for creating consent itself.

The Muslim fundamentalist, too, is in a sense applying force upon his soceity by seeking to ban the modern age. His action is akin to the declaration of Emergency, and the banning of all opposition, by Indira Gandhi. It is the clearest proof of the existence of a deep crisis within Islam, the presence of profoundly disturbing and unresolved problems in its soul. Therefore, the spread of fundamentalism is not a sign of the strength of Islam in the modern age but of its tremendous inner weakness. The inability to come to terms with modern ideas of freedom and democracy and secularism, with pluralism in Muslim majority societies and with minority status in non-Muslim majority societies, is an indication of the loss of flexibility and broad sympathy of mind and of the falling back upon rigid and narrow notions. This is plainly a condition of decline, for Islam was not always such. Says Gibb:

> Many times already, "Muslim religious leaders, confronted by the insistent demand of new modes of thought, have set themselves to the task of re-stating in their terms the eternal principles of Koranic interpretation of the universe. We can, without exaggeration, speak of a Muslim Stoicism, a Muslim Aristotelianism, a Muslim Pantheism, all within the four corners of the orthodox community. The puritan reaction can never actually reverse this tendency and restore the primitive formulation and outlook.[3]

It is my firm conviction that, just as Indira Gandhi's Emergency led to eventual disaster, so also this fundamentalist emergency can only lead to disastrous consequences. The example of communism, and the sudden collapse of a monolith, has shown that whoever insists on being a possessor of final truth, and seeks to impose that truth upon society, will end up in the dustbin of history. For, truth can never be a possession. We are always at best seekers of the truth, always in a state of becoming, always interacting with the external environment of other cultures and growing or diminishing by the manner of our interaction. Whoever believes himself to possess the whole truth, as the fundamentalist does, will automatically cut himself off from healthy interaction with other cultures, will see such interaction as a menace, and will be unable to deal with and will indeed avoid dealing with the governing ideas and central problems of the contemporary world. With his shrunken, undernourished "truth", he will eventually perish.

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IN earlier ages each culture could exist in relative isolation and grow largely as a result of internal interactions. Today, isolation is impossible and no culture can just *be*. It has to *become*, it has to exist as *continually becoming*. This is the inherent complexity in the problem of retaining one's identity. Whereas a static identity is self-destructive, dynamism is feared as possibly leaving intact no identifiable entity. That is why Reform and Assertion have to go hand in hand. One has to *seek to be oneself* while constantly striving to *become universal*. A culture has to grow from the foundation of its essential truths by enriching itself through the absorption and assimilation of external influences, and by striving to solve in its own way the world problems of this age. To shrink from enlargement and change, and to seek a static of being, is impossible. It cannot work and is a sure invitation to disaster.

I have no doubt that, like other great religious traditions, Islam too, after deep inner struggles, will find a way out and avert the disaster of fundamentalism.

It seems to me, if I may be permitted to express my opinions in the matter, that it is the traditional concepts of God and of revelation that are centrally responsible for the authoritarian tendency in traditional Islam and the demand that it makes upon man to distrust himself and submit to external authority. The conception of the Divine traditionally most emphasised in Islam is the overwhelming sense of God's majesty and terrifying power. There is an inherent "otherness" about God, a stark contrast between man and God. And revelation consists of commandments of God sent through an Angel (Gabriel) to the Prophet. They are not the incomplete discoveries of a Prophet in states of communion with the Divine. The nature of God is such that, though he is indeed merciful, he expects obedience and knows how to exact it. Therefore, submission becomes the duty of man. It is this authoritarian tendency that fundamentalism seeks to build upon.

In the Christian religious tradition, it is the figure of Christ, the son of God, who mediates between man and God and takes away the terrifying aspect of the Divine Indeed, wherever there is a belief in incarnation, or God manifest in man, the terrifying aspect of the Divine is automatically taken away. The overwhelming force of the mystic tradition, of the belief in an immanent God, and the example of popular saints like Meera with her Beloved, have swept aside the terror of God from the Hindu religious tradition as a whole. For this reason some Muslim fundamentalists imagine that the Hindus don't take religion and morality seriously and need to be converted to Islam! They forget that, even if their logic be granted that fear is the basis of morality, the Hindus believe in the law of *karma* and for them morality does not require the fear of God, or even belief in God.

Among Hindu conceptions of the Divine, Kali alone is Terrible, but She is eventually a Mother and Protector. The only parallel to the traditional Islamic conception that I can think of in the Hindu tradition is an episode in the Gita in the 11th Canto when, on Arjuna's request, Krishna reveals his Divine form to him. Arjuna is awestruck and terrified, and he prostrates himself and seeks Krishna's forgiveness for treating him as a friend. But the tension passes and Krishna resumes his role of friend and adviser. If, however, that tension had persisted, the character of the Gita would have been completely changed. It would have taken the form of imperious commandments, whereas the whole charm of the poem in its present form lies in its advisory character, its friendly tone and the number of alternatives it offers to the seeker.

But if God is essentially an external Other, then what issues from him can be perceived only as a command. This is the traditional position emphasised by Muslim fundamentalists. It is, therefore, instructive to see Umar, who was a dear Companion of the Prophet, disagreeing with the Prophet on several occasions and as Caliph definitely refusing on at least one proven occasion to implement the clear and categorical Quranic injunction to cut off the hands of a thief, male or female. This exercise of discretion was possible for the great Caliph because he was close to the Prophet and to the Divine and understood the true spirit of the Quran. Fear and rigidity are often a product of remoteness.

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SUFISM was a great wave of love within Islam, and without Sufism Islam could not have spread far and wide. The Divine lost its terrors and became the Beloved. "I love Thee with two loves," begins a moving poem of the woman saint, Rabia. Islam ceases to be a collection of external rituals and prescribed practices and becomes instead an outpouring of the aspiring soul. At first the Sufi movement with its immanentist conception of God was sought to be repressed; but repression proved futile. Eventually a compromise had to be worked out, and even today Sufi influences seem to predominate among the Muslim masses, even though fundamentalism is at the moment intellecutally ascendant. It is indeed a pity that an adequate effort has not been made to meet modern needs by building upon Sufi traditions.

It must of course be understood that Sufism was not concerned with social problems *per se*, that is, with the realm in which the contemporary crisis of Islam has most powerfully manifested itself. In earlier ages it was possible to have a relatively static society, and the Sufis were not thinking centrally about the position of women or other such social questions. They had opposed Islamic legalism (a variant of fundamentalism) because they saw that it was stifling religion. Theirs was an authentic religious upsurge that spontaneously spoke out against social and religious authoritarianism. It is the *attitude* of the Sufis, their large and generous interpretations, that

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may still prove fruitful in today's crisis. For example, despite the statement of the Quran that "God will not forgive idolatry. He will forgive whom He will all other sins,"[5] the Sufis declared that God can be present not only in churches and synagogues but also in the temples of idolators.[6] It is this interpretative generosity that fundamentalism seeks to abolish and which contemporary Islam certainly needs.

Today social conditions have changed dramatically, and so too have social conceptions. I am required to live in peace in a plural society, and I may be put in intimate contact with people of other religions. Suppose I am a Muslim, and as a child, during school and after, I had formed those intimate childhood friendships that never die—with a Jew, a Christian, a Hindu, and a fourth with no religion. I have now grown up, but I am still very close to them and always will be. But I read in the Quran:

> Believers, do not choose the infidels rather than the faithful for your friends Would you give God a clear proof against yourselves?[7]
>
> Believers, take neither Jews nor Christians for your friends. Whoever of you seeks their friendship shall become one of their number.[8]

What do I do? They are genuine friends, I can find no fault with them. But I believe in the Quran as the word of God. Shall I put the claims of Islamic brotherhood above those of human brotherhood? What should I do?

Or suppose I am a Muslim woman, and through my intimate contact with just one man, I have understood what fakes men are, how hollow their pretence of superiority is, and how weak and dependent they really are. But I read in the Quran:

> Men have authority over women because God has made the one superior to the other.. Good women are obedient ..As for those from whom you fear disobedience, admonish them and send them to beds apart and beat them. Then if they obey you, take no further action against them.[9]

And again:

> Women are your fields: go, then, into your fields whence you please [10]

My instincts recoil at such statements, and it is my direct personal experince that men are not superior to women. But I genuinely accept the Quran as the Word of God, and I want to believe in every word of it. In certain moods, the mere thought of the Quran fills me with deep religious emotion and tears well up in my eyes. I want to believe every word, and yet how can I just set aside what I deeply feel to be true? What should I do?

It is such contradictions that the modern world is forcing upon individual Muslims and upon Muslim society at large. One alternative is to be a non-modern Muslim denying one's own authentic being, the other is to be a non-Muslim modern denying one's own roots. It is an impossible choice. A third alternative has to be worked out, which can combine commitment to Islam with the affirmation of one's authentic being. A liberal viewpoint, and interpretative generosity, are unavoidable.

Fundamentalism is a device for concealing these contradctions, for shutting out doubts and discontents. But real problems demand real solutions. They cannot be permanently repressed, they just will not fade away. Fundamentalism is merely storing trouble for the future. Can Islam really hope to flourish in the contemporary world without a modern conscience?

What is the nature of the Divine? Is it the transcendent and the Other, or is it also immanent in all? What is the meaning of revelation, and of a revealed Book? Is the Prophet's theory of revelation itself revealed, or does it carry traces of the age in which he lived? What do we mean by the inerrancy of a scripture? Is ever word literally true, or is there an inner spirit, or basic structure of truth, that the Book embodies? The Quran itself says in one place that "some of its verses are precise in meaning—they are the foundation of the Book—and others ambiguous" [11] And in another place it says: "God speaks in metaphors oto men."[12] Which verses are precise and which ambiguous, and where are the metaphors? These questions have to be asked for arriving at a correct understanding of the Quran. But to ask such questions is to raise the issue of interpretation and the further questions: Who is to interpret the Quran for me? Why must an authority interpret the Book for me? May I not seek to understand it myself?

And what is meant by the statement that the Quran is the final revelation? Does it mean that the Quran suffices and is complete in itself for religious purposes, or does it mean that whatever comes after it is false or misleading, even if it issues from such spiritual giants as Guru Nanak Dev and Ramakrishna Paramhansa?

It is such basic issues that Muslim thinkers will have to concern themselves with, if they are serious about tackling the problem of fundamentalism. Focussing on the narrower question of a dynamic *shariat* leaves the foundations of fundamentalism intact.

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LET us now return to our national perspective.

The problem is and has been—how to achieve a national goal, namely, secularism, without violating the sense of integrity of the Muslims. The BJP has pointed to the existence and spread of Muslim fundamentalism and posed the question whether we are serious about secularism, and if not, it suggests a *Hindu Rashtra* instead of a fragile and opportunistic compromise with fundamentalist Muslims. This is the essence of the situation today.

One way to meet this situation is to persist in the traditional *mayavad* and to merely launch into abuse of the BJP for seeking to give life to an illusion. No one seriously believes that this can work any longer. Another way is that suggested by Madhu Limaye: let the State go ahead with amendments to Muslim Personal Law, with or without the consent of the Muslim community. That so respected a secularist should feel constrained to make so startling a suggestion is indicative of two things: first, the emergence of a serious new situation, and secondly, the desirability of some kind of change in the attitude of the Muslims. However, it is in this requirement of change in the Muslims that the real difficulty lies. For the Muslims themselves are in a state of chronic tension and sincerely, strongly and deeply feel that their way of life is being threatened. And they appear willing to fight it out if need be.

Upholding a Supreme Court judgement, which came in the normal course at the end of a long process of litigation, would have been a different thing altogether; but for the State to actively intervene and take the initiative in amending the Personal Law of the Muslims would today be a serious provocation. So I cannot agree with Madhu Limaye's suggestion.

What can and should be done is to create *a liberal environment* in which the right of the Muslims to be themselves is fully assured, but at the same time the right to frankly criticise Muslim fundamentalism is freely exercised. This in turn requires that the Hindus themselves be firmly and securely in possession of a modern conscience.

It would be best of course if Muslim leaders could openly accept secularism in principle as the eventual goal of their community but retain the right to secularise their community under their own control and at their own pace. If such a declaration is not possible in the present circumstances, the next best thing would be for all secular parties to repudiate what I have called Option 4 above and to express themselves in favour of the universal application of secularism *in principle*—while at the same time assuring the Muslims of (and ensuring in practice) their right to be themselves and therefore to secularise under their own control and at their own pace.

Only a complex response of this kind, combining firmness in principle with flexibility in practice, will meet the challenge of the present situation. It demands great integrity and political skill to carry it through. Whether our political system can rise to the challenge will decide the destiny of this nation.

Post Script: I hope the above analysis will have made it clear that the BJP has arisen primarily to foreclose Option 4, that it is not inspired by any great idealistic dream, that its perception of the problem of Muslim fundamentalism is far too simplistic and plainly partisan, and that it sees the problem almost as one to be resolved at the level of street fights. That is why the BJP, as it is presently constituted, cannot resolve the problem of identities.

As to the other great problem of the country, that of change and of reordering society, it is evident that the BJP is thinking of it primarily in terms of abstract national greatness and not in concrete human terms as freedom, dignity and social justice for the poor and the deprived. The BJP is apparently a disciplined party, and it does have thinking and committed people in its midst, but it is inspired centrally by a collectivist vision of an India made strong by the devotion and sacrifice of its citizens. What it does not see is the tragedy of the mutilated and sub-human lives of the millions who are daily oppressed and in constant anxiety for mere existence. The BJP's collectivist vision is meaningless for those millions and merely mocks at their condition. The only meaningful vision for those millions is that of security, social justice, freedom from oppression and the assertion of human dignity. And if we put this vision at the centre, then the mysticism of Mother India automatically fades into the background, but the image of India made strong by the devotion of its citizens stands out with a fresh meaning and in new colours.

The BJP, then, does not deal rightly with the problem of reordering society, and though in some respects it is more aware than other parties of the problem of identity, does not deal rightly with that problem either, since it lacks the broad and generous spirit of Indian civilisation.

Journalists are notoriously short-sighted; so when an eminent journalist[11] declares that the BJP is the party of the future, he may mean no more than that the BJP will trumph in the next general elections. But if by "party of the future" we mean a party that will take us beyond the present crises that have become chronically part of our way of life, if we refer to a future that begins a new epoch in India's history, in which she is at last at peace with herself, then it is evident, and more than evident, that the BJP is not that party. Like most of the rest today, it is very much a party of our current confusions, of the blind leading the blind—into the ditch. ■

(Concluded)

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4 I am greatly indebted for my views to the writings of Prof Jamel Khwaja: *Quest for Islam*, and *Authenticity and Islamic Liberalism* Both books have been brought out by Allied Publications.

5 *The Koran*, Penguin Classics, 4.116, p 173

6 *Understanding Islam*, Frithjof Schuon, Unwin Paperbacks, p 55.

7. *The Koran* (Translated by N J Dawood), Penguin Classics, 4: 144, p. 175. I find it difficult to arrive at the number of the sura, unless it is indicated in the text itself Hence I am giving page number as well.

8. *Ibid.*, 5 51, p. 85.

9. *Ibid.*, 4:34, p. 64

10. *Ibid.*, 2.223, p. 33.

11. *Ibid* , 3:6, p. 43.

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13. Giri Lal Jain.

BOOK REVIEW

Dimensions of Violence in South Asia

PARTHA S. GHOSH

Violence has a record going beyond the creation of the state. But political violence as a collective human action, whether explicit or implicit, has a history, explicably enough, not older than the state. It is in the socio-political system that man's genius has contrived, that group interests are peaceably articulated only so long as dividends are ensured through compromises. But as soon as doubts are raised about the compromise formulae societal adjustments teeter and ultimately crumble giving rise to violence of one form or the other. Sometimes it is the state versus one group or more while sometimes it is between and among groups themselves with the state playing the role of an arbiter.

Mirrors of Violences: Communities, Riots and Survivors in South Asia, edited by Veena Das; Oxford University Press, 1990; pp. 407; Price: Rs 225.

In the post-colonial societies where nation-building processes are under pressure to deliver the goods in a record time, violence has become endemic because inter-group interests have not yet been reciprocally compromised and bargained for within the composite structure of the state. In many parts of the European continent the notions of a modern state and that of a nation emerged virtually simultaneously but in the Third World in general it is invariably the case that the state came into existence without the nation being formed. That this anachronism would not be without its problems, is expected.

In South Asia the problem found one of its worst expressions. Accounting for about one-third of the humanity, it is one of the most heterogeneous regions of the world in terms of ethnicity and religious beliefs. To add to the complexity is the peculiar geographical terrain which prevents the regional states from confining their policies and pronouncements strictly within their political boundaries even with the best of their efforts. In the given situation violence becomes inherent in the circumstances. It is this theme which the present book under review addresses in several of its dimensions and, as such, is most welcome.

Edited by noted sociologist Veena Das, the volume comprises 14 chapters including the introductory and the concluding ones contributed by the editor. In the introductory chapter Das has given some indications of the way she views the problem. Some of her remarks warrant reflection.

> The violence against the Sikhs in 1984 in Delhi or against the Tamils in 1983 was a traumatic experience for the entire Sikh and Tamil communities because the violence penetrated into spaces that had been considered relatively immune. In contrast, the Hindu-Muslim riot in 1987 in Delhi remained confined to the walled city, a traditional area in which riots have occurred with some regularity. These were ignored by the wider populace of the city, which went about its tasks in the spirit of 'business as usual' (p 11)

Dr Ghosh is the Director, Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi.

Similarly,

> the violence against Sikhs left both communities uncertain as to whether the conflict was over religion or politics. One indication of this uncertainty was that significant religious festivals such as Holi, Diwali or the birthday of Guru Nanak Dev were viewed with apprehension of fresh or retaliatory violence, but so were occasions of national importance such as the Republic Day or Independence Day. (p 19)

In the concluding chapter Das touches upon one of the themes which often does not get the academic attention it deserves for it is always considered to be the forte of social and human rights activists. What kind of psycho-sociological trauma the survivors of a riot undergo has been graphically presented by the author with a rare compassion. Concentrating primarily upon the experience of a Sikh widow who lost her husband and three male children in the 1984 riots, Das has probed into several dimensions of societal tension—gender, economic, familial, communal and so on. This widow, whose name ironically was Shanti (meaning 'peace'), could never get over the tragedy that had befallen her and ultimately committed suicide. Das writes:

> The entire dialogical relation between Shanti and myself was concentrated on the day of the riots. Her entire present was now nothing more than a slow unfolding and mental replaying of the decisions and events of the riots. Unlike Freud's analogy of the recall of the past as the 'looking' at a passing landscape from a running train, Shanti had no means by which she could distance herself enough from the past so that the present could be made 'present' in her consciousness. The traveller in the train, looking at his past as a passing landscape, can describe it from a vantage point of distance. Shanti, on the other hand, could not move from that particular day. (p 339)

Shanti's case, however, was not representative of the experience of all the bereaved families. Generally they tried to deal with the problem in a collective manner and looked for relief and resettlement benefits.

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ABOUT the survivors two more studies have been devoted: one by Amrit Srinivasan which again focuses on the 1984 riots and the other by Valli Kanapathipillai which deals with the anti-Tamil riots of 1983 in Colombo. The latter is based on detailed interviews of four Tamils who had different experiences to narrate. The fact which stands out is that while a particular community may be emotionally charged to inflict physical injuries on the other community many a time it is a personal vendetta that is served by taking advantage of a larger phenomenon. Still, the author concludes:

> It is particularly useful to think of the concept of totalisation of such situations, for violence homogenises people and renders them indistinct: Kamala [one of the interviewees] found that, regardless of her political ideology [she was a critic of the LTTE], she was identified as a Tamil. Conversely, the violence was seen to be perpetrated on behalf of the whole Sinhala community, even though the crowds consisted only of 'thugs' and 'hoodlums', and even though many Sinhala neighbours and friends risked their lives to provide help. (p 341)

Psychoanalytical perspectives on violence have been presented by India's two leading political psychologists, Ashis Nandy and Sudhir Kakar. Like his earlier studies on Indian culture and politics, for example, those contained in his *At the Edge of Psychology: Essays in Politics and Culture* (OUP, 1980), Nandy's paper expectedly is replete with fresh interpretations. Some of his arguments of course may not be accepted by all. For example, the argument that the Indian society is increasingly becoming modern and these modernities have posed a threat to the so-called traditionalists and hence "much of the fanaticism and violence associated with religion comes today from the sense of defeat of the believers, from their feelings of impotence, and from their free-floating anger and self-hatred while facing a world which is increasingly secular and desacralised" (p. 79) is indeed debatable. Empirical research tends to suggest that Hindu fundamentalism and the BJP's influence have substantially grown among the middle-classes, the very people Nandy considers have little to do with the religion.

These are, however, matters of emphasis. On the central question as to why secularism has failed in India, Nandy's logic is unassailable. The point that he makes most succintly is that Nehru's championing of the cause when he himself was an agnostic probably did the greatest damage to the application of the idea. Indeed one does not listen to an agnostic about the virtues of secularism. Writes Nandy:

> Though we are not told, with a great deal of embarrassment, that he believed in astrology and *tantra*, Nehru rightfully belongs to this rung ["believers neither in public nor in private"] because he always made modern Indians a little ashamed of their religious beliefs and ethnic origins, convincing them that he himself had the courage and rationality to neither believe in private nor in public. By the common consent of the Indian middle classes, Nehru provided a perfect role model for twentieth century citizens of the flawed cultural reality called India. (p 75)

Kakar's study, like that of Nandy, makes an intersting point that upper class Hindu society suffers from some kind of narcissism in which the other groups, notably the Muslims, are looked down upon as inferiors. Drawing his inference from a large number of possession cases in which the victims were possessed by Muslim *bhutas* and also from the analyses of dreams Kakar is of the view that

> the family and extended group of a Hindu upper-caste child.. .not only provides him with its myths and rituals

> which increase his sense of group cohesion and of narcissism in belonging to such an exalted entity, but also help him in elaborating and fleshing out his demonology of other ethnic and religious groups. The *purana* of the Muslim demon, for instance, as elaborated by many Hindu groups, has nothing to do with Sufi saints, the Prophet's sayings or the more profound sentiments of Islam. Instead, its stories are of rape and pillage by the legions of Ghazni and Timur as well as other more local accounts of Muslim mayhem. (p. 138)

About the recent phenomenon of an increasing schism between the Hindus and the Sikhs, Kakar ascribes it primarily to the Bluestar Operation.

> The damage done to the Akal Takht—as much a symbol of corporate militancy as of religious piety—reinforced the two M's—militancy and martyrdom—the inner counterparts of the well-known five K's which constitute the outer markers of the Khalsa warrior identity. The exaggerated value placed on martyrdom is hard to understand for the Hindus since oppressors in their mythology.... tended to be destroyed by divine intervention rather than by the sacrifice of martyrs. The army action was then a hurt to the Sikh religious sentiments in a very different way from the sense in which a Hindu understands the term. It was an affront to group narcissism, to a shared grandiose self. The consequent feelings were of narcissistic hurt and rage. This was brought home to me again and again as I listened to groups of anguished men and women in front of the ruins of the Akal Takht. Most men stood in attitudes of sullen defeat, scorned and derided by the women with such sentences as 'where is the starch in your moustache now?' (p. 140)

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TWO chapters in the book—Gyanedra Pandey's "Colonial Construction of 'Communalism': British Writings on Banaras in the Nineteenth Century" and Michael Roberts' "Noise as Cultural Struggle: Tom-Tom Beating the British, and Communal Disturbances in Sri Lanka, 1880s-1930s"—provide insights into the colonial contributions to the making of inter-communal cleavages in the subcontinent. Pandey's point which has now been elaborated in his book, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India,* focuses upon how both the British official and non-official interpretations of 1809 Banaras riots were "constructed out of the prejudices, biases and 'common sense' of the writers". As a result even "bare facts" were distorted and given a particular colour.

> Thus, 'fanatical and clannish' entities, 'disorderly sectors or the population', communities 'prone to dacoity and rioting', 'fires of religious animosity', 'indiscriminate affrays'—these are the phrases that make for the history of Mubarakpur or Banaras or Shahabad in the nineteenth century as told by colonialist writers at the beginning of the twentieth. (pp. 131-132)

Michael Roberts' paper makes an interesting reading in several respects. It not only highlights the inherent British insensitivity to deeper socio-religious consciousness of the Sinhalas which was reflected in the 1965 police ordinance banning tom-tom beating at the Buddhist festivities; it also explodes the myth that in colonial days laws were uniformly enforced. While the ordinance was strictly enforced in prominent towns, it had virtually no impact in small towns and villages. What is, however, more important to note is that the application of the ordinance led in due course of time to intercommunal riots, both Buddhist-Catholic and Buddhist-Muslim, particularly because of the fact that while noise had a definite place in the Buddhist (also Hindu) culture it was conspicuous by its absence in Judeo-Christian and Islamic traditions. Ultimately the Sinhalese resistance to Western interference with their cultural lives culminated in the growth of Sinhala nationalism based on religion, language and ethnicity.

Roberts' diatribe, however, suffers from a few inadequacies. His paper hardly leaves any scope for the explanation of the Sinhala-Tamil ethnic conflict which also had its origin during the same period. In his model Tamils have not been identified as "they". It would have been better had the author clarified this point at least in a footnote.

From the paper it is not clear whether the British policy in question was a piece of malafide intention or an error of judgement. The tenor of Roberts' argument tends to suggest that it was the latter but at times it signals otherwise. It may be noted that many well-meaning people in India advocate a ban against religious processions in front of shrines of the other communities. In an ICSSR-sponsored seminar held in 1989 the noted physicist, Raja Ramanna, even asked for a ban on hymns and sermons chanted through loudspeakers from mandirs and masjids for they unnecessarily created-noise. Does Raja Ramanna suffer from the same kind of insensitivity as the Britishers did?, one may ask Roberts.

Dipesh Chakrabarty's article "Communal Riots and Labour: Bengal's Jute Mill-hands in the 1890s" focuses upon the indigenous socio-economic factors that led to the growth of communalism in Bengal which were intensified by colonial economic and industrial policies. The central argument here is that the communal venom was injected in Bengal's body politic by two migrant communities—the Urdu speaking Bihari Muslims and the non-Bengali speaking Marwari Hindus. The class conflict between these two groups further widened the cleavage which eventually contributed to the partition of India, a theme elaborated by Kenneth McPherson in his study, *The Muslim Microcosm: Calcutta 1918 to 1935.* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1974)

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THE economic variable in the analysis of riots has also received attention in Sunil Bastian's "Political Economy of Ethnic Violence in Sri Lanka: The July 1983 Riots". Supplementing Kalechki's model of "intermediate regimes" with the ethnic varible, Bastian tries to provide a political economic interpretation of the growth of Sinhala-Tamil conflict. Starting from the premise that international financial agencies such as the IMF and the World Bank have a stranglehold over the Sri Lankan economy, Bastian argues that the policies adopted by the UNP Government after 1977 have made this dependence more structural. Since this dependence has an in-built compulsion for political stability, efforts are ever on to "manage" the ethnic conflict through the policies of accommodation which in effect irk the Sinhala chauvinists. This logic, however, is of a dubious nature. Does it not imply then that the state should not venture even to "manage" an inter-ethnic problem however acute it is? The author has not only left this question unanswered, he has made little effort to apply his own model to explain the July 1983 riots.

The variable of day-to-day politics contributing to communalism in India has been brilliantly addressed by Ashish Banerji. The essence of his thesis is actually capsuled in the title phrase of his paper itself: "Comparative Curfew", an expression he has borrowed from one of his police interviewees in UP. It suggests that in the existing communal milieu of UP as well as elsewhere, the law enforcing authorities often take a partisan view of the situation during the riots and even while enforcing the curfew regulations they tend to be "lenient with the Hindus and inordinately strict with the Muslims". Banerji has convincingly argued that the communal question in the post-independence India is structurally linked to the stability factor of politics. So long as the Congress party was able to provide a stable government at the Centre (as well as in the States), say in the fifties and sixties, riots were relatively less in number. But as politics became increasingly competitive, minorities became victims of political manipulation. As a result riots were routinised. In this context the author is particularly critical of the role played by the Congress party which showed little hesitation even to align with the RSS although its public posture was avowedly anit-RSS. Banerji of course has put the blame also upon bureaucracy and the police for aggravating the situation. He, however, would have completed the story had he also taken into account the role of the press, particularly the local language press, the negative contribution of which in building communal frenzy cannot be over-emphasised.

The theme of Upendra Baxi's "Reflections on the Reservations Crisis in Gujarat" is also politics. Exploding the myth that Gandhi's Gujarat is non-violent and socially progressive, Baxi argues that the Gujarati society, like those in several other parts of the country, is quite violent and that its social stratifications are equally retrograde—"68 per cent of the untouchables are denied access to potable water from high-caste Hindu wells". (p. 215) Against this backdrop the question of reservation for the OBCs and how it got entangled into the politics of the State has been analysed. Baxi makes a strong case to suggest that the ruling Congress party manipulated to blur the distinction between 'class' and 'cestes' for its political advantage. There is, however, one major avoidable weakness in the paper. Although about one-third of it is devoted to communal riots in the State there is hardly any effort to logically link them to the anti-reservation stir leaving the two sections mutually exclusive.

Pakistani perspectives on riots have been provided by Akmal Hussain and Farida Shaheed in their papers, the focus of both being the inter-ethnic riots that rocked Hyderabad and Karachi in 1985-86. Attributing the riots to the crisis of the Pakistani state Hussain writes:

> ...the fragmentation of civil society along various groups on religious, ethnic, *biradari* and sub-regional lines, and the rapid arming of conflicting groups weakened the basic function of the state, which is the protection of citizens.... In these circumstances, it is not surprising that an increasing number of people are seeking alternative support mechanisms in their communities to seek redress against injustice as well as to secure themselves against a physical threat to their persons and families.... Thus, the crisis of state power has engendered a crisis in civil society in which the polity is polarised along various vertical lines. (pp. 192-93)

To this ethnic interpretation Shaheed adds a class variable by arguing that

> where state benefits only discriminate between classes, it is to be expected that class contradictions will be foremost. Where there is an additional layer of provincial or ethnic discrimination, local elites who mediate between the state and the individual can easily manipulate the resentments of a people along ethnic lines and provide the necessary backing for a movement. (p. 211)

On the whole the book under review is extemely readable and should receive attention of both the champions of state power and their critics, the champions of *Hindutva* and their opponents, and the liberals and the reactionaries. Since the debate between these two sets is unending so is also violence.

Sigmund Freud's penetrating remark sounds as relevant today as it sounded six decades ago when it was made. At the suggestion of the International Institute for Cultural Cooperation, Freud wrote to Albert Einstein in September 1932:

> We may define 'right' (that is law) as the right of a community. Yet, it, too, is nothing else than violence. It is the communal, not individual, violence that has its way.

■

Symbol of Cultural Domination

SUSHANT KUMAR MISHRA

The recent riots in America which flashed from Los Angeles and spread to many other parts of the country left at least 58 dead and 2300 injured just in Los Angeles. Besides, property worth $717 million was damaged. These riots soon spread to several American cities. Trouble erupted even in Toronto in Canada. Behind all this was a California court verdict—delivered on April 29, 1992—that acquitted four White policemen charged for using excessive force against Rodney King, a Black motorist, while he offended the traffic rules in March last year. The court judgement was seen to be tainted with racial feelings. This led to widespread protests which eventually deteriorated into a riotous situation. Even now parts of Los Angeles and other American cities remain tense though calm, according to the official version.

This is not an isolated case when the Black-White gulf has created social tensions thereby unleashing a series of general sporadic violent incidents. In fact, the looting and violence only concretise the already existing social tension in almost all the countries where the Whites have to live with their Black brethren. Be it South Africa, Britain or France the colour of the skin does matter. The recent rise in the number of the supporters of the Rightist Le Pen in France also shows that even the more liberal societies like the one in France tend to fall into the trap of racist sentiments. The political dialogue in France today is dominated by racist feelings against the immigrants. After the recent riots in America, it is sure that the Black question is going to be an important issue in the forthcoming US Presidential elections. And South Africa is definitely the worst example of racial hatred. No humanitarian plea could have ever had any impact on the South African regime.

This racial hatred has a long history. Its nastiest chapter in modern times is perhaps the anti-Semitism of Hitler. Since then till today there has existed a constant opposition to all forms of racism. South Africa was politically and, to a great extent, economically isolated. Ethnic resurgence, xenophobic sentiments and racial feelings have almost always been criticised. Still the anti-racist dialogue fails to check the spread of racism, as is illustrated by the examples enumerated above. What is worse, a kind of fatalistic pessimism is growing regarding the nature of man. Many intellectuals even argue that anarchy and violence are there to stay as dialectically opposed tendencies of man's social instincts. This implies that the violence is justified and thus even racism seeks a justification. So man becomes a wolf for the other man.

Man is a convivial beast endowed with reason and can very well understand the contradictions between his social instincts and racial violence. As social animals, men all over the world are the same, but as political animals they tend to group themselves according to different categories—some being progressive and others being retrogressive. When we see racism as a crime of attempted social suicide, we definitely consider racism as an extremely degenerate form of social scourge. And if we consider anti-racism to be an anti-thesis of racism, we wonder as to what could be the possible synthesis that the future has in store for us. And we may doubt that the possible synthesis would make the world better.

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WHAT is intriguing is the existence of racism as a form of organised hatred. Racism hardly holds any scientific ground in today's world. The geneticians today have proved beyond doubt that any notion of racial superiority based on the biological constitution of man is false. Yet we see a gradual spread of racism despite anti-racist campaigns.

The anti-racist campaigners in today's Western world have to go for an introspection if they really want to understand the causes of their failure. Anti-racist campaigners reject racism as a vestige of the past based on erroneous scientific theories and false explanations of history. On the other hand, the racists have shifted their argument from "racial purity" to a question of an "authentic cultural identity". It is on this basis that clubs like the Ku Klux Klan in America and Rightist leaders like Carl Lang or Jean Marie Le Pen survive in France. It is this notion of "authentic cultural identity" that keeps Southhall separate from other parts of London.

Once a paradigm of the cultural segmentation starts defining races, the derisive attitude for an "inferior race" is replaced by the fear of being identified as an integral part of a "decadent" culture. This mentality generates a Rightist dialogue which identifies races as "assimilable" or "non-assimilable" entities.

This heterophobic attitude may help us in understanding the anatomy of the current form of racism in the Western world. In Britain it is always the anti-British feeling that is supposed to characterise the "stinking" Asians. On the question of South Africa, Britain has evaded taking a concrete stance for long. In France, Le Pen always appeals to guard against "*le racism anti-francais*", that is, "anti-French racism". Can racism be against a nation? Yes, if a naton is seen as a politico-geographical entity predominantly defined by its cultural identity and at the same time if that racism is based on the notion of a cultural superiority.

In America and South Africa the situation is a bit different. Since the racists in South Africa cannot define their nation as solely comprising of Whites, so they have developed a phobia for the Blacks participating in the national process. So, Nelson Mandela was imprisoned for twentyseven long years just for having cherished "the ideal of a democratic and free society". And even his release from the prison on February 11, 1990 led many to appeal to their White brothers to collect a "million guns" for the "coming civil war" to be fought against the Blacks. America is yet different. There, the feelings of cultural superiority had got more or less economic basis as well. In 1990, the average weekly earning of a Black man was about $325 whereas the same for a White man was about $425. Obviously, there is a big difference in the average life standard of the Blacks when compared to that of the Whites. This difference gets translated into a racist and perverted cultural ideology which treats Blacks as subhuman animals living in society. They are seen to be aesthetically bankrupt and habitually beastlike. So a Black man can be beaten like an animal and the policemen who beat him can get a clean chit even from the court.

In such a situation, nothing else but a random violence against all that comes in the way, can be expected. And hence this sporadic violence by Blacks, which is a consequence of frustration because of their meek position against the strong state authority. But this violence may be seen by the White racists as a proof of the Black bestiality thus strengthening their belief in the erroneous understanding of their own racial superiority. But this attitude will lead only to the destruction of valuable lives and public property. It should be the foremost concern of the American nation to avoid the fragmentation of its social fabric on racial lines. If not, resentments will grow against the Americans who claim to champion the cause of human rights all over the world. ■

AN APPEAL

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Germany and Unipolar Uneasiness

SARAL PATRA

Helmut Kohl has once again done it. Notwithstanding the US President's totally negative approach to the basic objectives of the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Kohl got up to say that his country would have no hesitation to participate in the prime task of saving the planet, and make due contribution towards the achievement of that goal.

Needless to say, policy-makers in Washington who have so far been backing the weird postures of the "unipolar supremo", have found this to be another example of defiance by the recalcitrant German Chancellor and his relentless effort to demarcate his country's position from that of the United States.

This, however, was not the first time that in recent months Germany took steps clearly contrary to those expected and advised by the United States. The formation of a Franco-German security force "in addition" to the NATO, is a move against which the US official and officially inspired agencies have been carrying on a campaign since mid-1991.

The earlier bouts of unsuccessful GATT negotiations, with the Europeans in unison rejecting the US pressure to do away altogether with farm subsidies, had annoyed Washington in no small measure. Persuasion, even American style, has failed because the Europeans turned round to point out that the US itself had taken no such step in regard to its own farm products.

The Europeans fear is that the withdrawal of the subsidies would immediately render their farm produce and the products manufactured from them, uncompetitive in world markets. This would enable the US to dump its own subsidised farm products in Europe to the detriment of the farmers of the European community.

Of course, Germany took the lead in warding off any US move that could jeopardise the Community's internal economic equilibrium. It had taken the present-day European Community over forty years since the signing of the European Coal and Steel Community Treaty (1951) under the Schuman Plan, to harmonise the economic activities of the member-states to proceed towards the ultimate economic and political integration.

The Community's policy covering the common agricultural market enjoins free movement of goods within its geographical limits and ensures total protection to intra-Community trade against imports from third countries. It also calls for selective cropping and price-freezing in response to market demands. Obviously, the Community does not want to upset its well-conceived and long-pursued delicate balance by letting in the burgeoning US hunger for markets like the bull in a China shop.

◆

IT will, however, be necessary to remember that the European Community has yet to travel a long way to complete its tasks of political and economic integration by the turn of the century. And in this, the role of unified Germany, with its 79 million people, its powerful economy and strong military presence on the continent, becomes crucial. The German Deutschmark is not only a stable currency but quite effectively meets the challenge of dollar which has been rather feeble in the international money market for quite some time now. In the midst of constant contrary pulls, even within the European Community—the United Kingdom's efforts to constantly obstruct the other eleven from going at a faster pace towards the goal—Germany has succeeded in ensuring the stability of its economy and political institutions.

An assessment of the Deutschmark, in early April 1992, shows that it maintained a prominent position among the European currencies, gaining against all of them except the French Franc. The analysts ascribed it to a run on the Finnish Markka and also the surprise entry of the Portuguese Escudo into the fixed exchange-rate mechanism of the European Monetary System.

In the matter of the German economy as a whole, the picture is now not so bright as it appeared before the unification of the two Germanys. The unification—call it a take-over, if you will—has, of course, given the country a political strength unmatched by any other member-state of the European Community. This is its plus point, but also turns negative when the past is held up to frighten its neighbours.

Germany has stretched its economic manoeuvrability to the utmost. The 1989 revolutions in the East European countries, did call on Germany to bail them out of an economic chaos. But the reality of unification proved to be much harsher. For the people in the western part of the country, it meant ever larger doses of taxes, cuts in certain social benefits and, above all, falling real incomes of the people. The recent strike in the public enterprises and services has been the direct outcome of the financial losses suffered by the people in the wake of "liberating" the people in the eastern part of the country.

The peak of its economic advance was reached in 1990, just before the unification came through, when the country's GDP of $1480 billion was well ahead of $1183 billion of France, $1089 billion of Italy, and $970 billion of the United Kingdom.

But, at the same time, the enormous material effort and support required to attain the goal set by the country's Basic Law—creation of uniform standard of living in the entire country—has not been achieved. In fact, it will take a good many years more to reach that goal. The tragic part of it all is that productivity in the eastern part of the country measures up to only one-third of what is obtained in the western part. To raise productivity in what is a totally new environment of work culture, requires time and, hence, the disparity in living standards is bound to continue. Under the new dispensation, there is no guaranteed employment, nor any assurance of "no work plus social benefits". But the Bonn authorities claim, these are but temporary difficulties—nothing that cannot be resolved within a short lapse of time. The programme of socio-economic "uplifting" the eastern part of the country is still on course, and efforts are on to bring it to its anticipated conclusion.

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DESPITE all these obstacles and handicaps, the new Germany has the potential of emerging rapidly as the main lever to guide the future of the European Community. In today's international economic ranking, Germany occupies the front row along with the United States and Japan. If the US is unable to set its house in order within the next two years, it is quite possible that Germany will stand a step ahead and close behind or even alongside Japan.

But the German leaders quite consciously avoid being categorised as the main lever of operation in the European Community. They are taking extraordinary care to discard any impression that would recall the past of a nation too cruel, too oppressive, too intolerant, a nation that had collected the unqualified hatred of all its neighbours and also of the world.

The regeneration of xenophobia, the attacks and the maltreatment of foreigners working in the different parts of the country, has again raised fears in the minds of the Europeans who could even now vividly recall the nightmare under Nazi domination. At various stages of its development and socio-economic progress since then, conscious efforts were made by the West German authorities to eradicate the memory of that despicable system, when East Germany (GDR) could claim, with a degree of conviction, of having fought to annihilate that anti-human ideology. History has not been on its side, to begin with; Germany has still to live down its Nazi past. The stigma persists because of the periodic reappearance of the cult, particularly in the region of its origin—the province of Bavaria—which has as its capital Munich, of the "Beer Hall" fame.

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THE fear of a rejuvenated Germany, displacing the United States from its self-selected pre-eminent position in the international political arena, does exist in a very acute form now. Several US officials and analysts have given vent to their apprehensions of an emerging colossus in Europe that would go berserk if not reined in time. A major US suspicion—and a valid one—is that the European Community headed by Germany in course of time would snuff out Washington's predominance and even presence in the continent.

The US complaint is not merely about ingratitude—having nurtured West Europe and particularly war-torn Germany back to life with heavy doses of Marshall Aid—the accusation is that both West Europe and Germany were now trying to get rid of the benefactor. The German and, thus, the European Community's economic strength would outstrip the US in no time if the new trend after the Maastricht Treaty to usher in a single market, continued unhindered. Thoroughly shaken by its own economic slide down and mounting debts, the US fears it would be pushed back to a position much behind that of Europe and Japan and its ability to manage the "new order" of its choice would be simultaneously and correspondingly curbed. (Some analysts assert that the worsening of the US economy was the price of "winning" the Gulf war.)

The European Community's trade with the US has suffered in 1991 compared to that in 1990. Its executive Commission said in a report in early April that the US commitment to free trade clashed with its "reluctance to recognise that the United States has its own trade impediments". The Commission's eighth annual report on US trade and investment barriers cited examples of protectionism such as high tariffs and taxes, export subsidies and other discriminatory treatment of European companies.

The report said the Community's 1991 exports to the United States totalled $86.5 billion, 5.9 per cent less than in 1990, while imports rose by 5.3 per cent to $103.2 billion. John Richardson, the Community's head of relations with the US, objected also to indirect US trade curbs designed to mould the trade policy of the European Community for political or environmental purposes, such as the law to punish the countries which trade with Cuba.

The US Vice-President, Dan Quayle, during a visit to Brussels in early February 1992, threatened that the failure to bring the GATT negotiations between the European Community and the US to a successful conclusion, that is, the former to agree to deep cuts in its farm subsidies, could harm the continent's relations with the latter—a trans-Atlantic problem of very severe proportions". The US Ambassador, James Woolsey an arms control negotiator, paraphrased to assert that if the European Community did not "deal with the American concern" (submit to its demands on subsidies), "you will find us inevitably beginning to move away, and in ways that you will not like".

"It is blackmail," said Dominique Moisi, the Deputy Director of the French Institute of International Relations in Paris.

In pressuring the European Community in respect of trade exchanges, the US is actually trying to isolate Germany from its smaller partners who might not be very sure of their ability to withstand US blandishments, and eventually blame Bonn's policies for their predicament. The objective is the same—stall as long as possible the emergence of Germany as a challenger to the supremo, and, in the process, make it once again accept the position of a junior partner.

There is another way also to curb Germany's politico-economic influence within the European Community and beyond—stir up an agitation by the erstwhile socialist countries of Eastern Europe to secure an early entry into the Community. Ms Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, a former US representative in the UN Security Council, gave an idea of such thinking while addressing the 40th anniversary conference of the *Problems of Communism* (Washington, October 22-23, 1991). She said:

> However desirable it might seem to some members and leaders of the European Community to "deepen" rather than to "widen", I believe that insistent demands from Eastern Europe will ultimately overwhelm them, and that the manifest need of Eastern Europe for closer association with the West will force the EC to adopt an inclusive policy. The desire for a common European home grows stronger, not weaker, in the wake of the collapse of communism and the overcoming of the division of Europe.

But Henry Kissinger has almost touched the core of the problems that appear to the US to be pushing it away from the position it had held in Europe ever since the end of the Second World War. In an article in early April this year, he wrote:

> Twice in a generation, America went to war because American leaders were convinced by Europeans themselves that Europe dominated by a single hostile power would constitute a threat to its security and economy. That reality has not changed. Though there are no powers ostensibly hostile to America in Europe today, the onset of any hegemonical pattern would rapidly be perceived as hostile...

The great achievement of the postwar generation of Western leaders was to recognise that, unless America was engaged early in preserving stability, it would be obliged to restore equilibrium under disastrous circumstances. ■

(Copyright author)

SUMIT: Washington Summit

(Continued from page 4)

However, if *The New York Times* editorial is any indication it shows that the US public opinion does not want to "remain captives of dangerous, mindless momentum"—a phrase which is also applicable to the Bush Administration with its myopic vision strengthened by Yeltsin's pronouncements.

Herein lies the hope of the triumph of Gorbachevian ideas on the world plane in the near or distant future. Despite all the negative prospects underlying the Bush-Yeltsin summit, its positive features, as evident in *The New York Times'* understanding, have reinforced that hope in no small measure.

As far as India is concerned, reinforcement that hope is of special value from the Third World perspective, that is, the perspective of the nuclear have-nots. However, for that hope to become a reality a concerted struggle must be carried out to its logical end. (The battle against imposition of the patently discriminatory nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is an integral part of that struggle.) Such a struggle would have to necessarily draw sustenance from the Western public opinion which is becoming increasingly critical of the Bush Administration's hegemonic designs that are directed against India's vital interests as well.

The latest Washington summit with its negative and positive results is bound to impart a substantive impetus to that struggle.

■

We do not believe in a rigid autarchy, but we do want to make India self-sufficient in regard to her needs as far as this is possible. We want to develop international trade, importing articles which we cannot easily produce and exporting such articles as the rest of the world wants from us. We do not propose to submit to the economic imperialism of any other country or to impose our own on others. We believe that the nations of the world can co-operate together in building a world economy which is advantageous for all and in this work we shall gladly co-operate. But this economy cannot be based on the individual profit motive, nor can it subsist within the framework of imperialist system. It means a new world order, both politically and economically, and free nations co-operating together for their own as well as the larger good.

Jawaharlal Nehru

(October 4, 1940)

Sah Brothers

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COMMUNICATION

On Tin Bigha Transfer

If one were to go only by the contents of the bilateral agreements and the Supreme Court judgement on the transfer of Tin Bigha to Bangladesh one would perhaps find oneself broadly in agreement with Raju Ramachandran ("Tin Bigha: No Legal Impediment", *Mainstream*, June 6). For the uninitiated, leasing of an area measuring 178 metres × 85 metres to a neighbouring country to honour international agreements and a Supreme Court judgement may appear a non-issue.

Why are, not only the BJP, several prominent Forward Block leaders of Cooch Behar and, most importantly, all such residents who will be immediately and directly affected by the proposed transfer and who know their neighbours across the border better, opposing it tooth and nail? The BJP is a late-entrant into the scene. But it has reached the forefront, thanks to the Governments in New Delhi and Calcutta for turning a deaf ear to widespread and organised protests of the local people. If a plebiscite were to take place today in Cooch Behar, one is fairly certain that the 'anti-changers' would win by a thumping margin.

What is normally played down is that mass-infiltration, smuggling and other illegal activities along the border have so frustrated the residents of Cooch Behar that they fear nothing short of 'forcible extradition' in the treaty. Partly irrational no doubt, but the power that be has done very little to allay such feelings.

What is becoming of a responsible and unbiased commentator is to appreciate such feelings and do his bit so that those do not go unnoticed and unheeded.

June 15, 1992
3B/A, Gagan Sarkar Road,
Calcutta

Samudra Gupta

NIRMALA LAKSHMAN: Rio Balance-sheet

(Continued from page 6)

countries a few months ago and other earlier meetings have sharply attacked the gross disproportion of consumption to population levels, the Summit did not really go into this question at all. For instance, the US refusal to even target the long term lowering of CO_2 levels underlines its oft-repeated rhetoric that it would do nothing to compromise American lifestyles.

◆

IF the Earth Summit did not really succeed in bridging North-South tensions as it set out to do, it at least set out in urgent terms that nations and communities have to get down seriously and urgently to the business of redefining priorities and setting goals and targets for immediate action. It is fairly obvious that though governments and non-governmental organisations in many developing countries may have found common voice on some issues at Rio, at home they are nearly always on opposite sides of the fence as far as environmental protection and the rights of the people and communities are concerned. It may be too hopeful to assume that the Rio Summit will be a tangible turning point in Indian environmental planning and development priorities but there is no doubt at all that the path we are currently on contravenes the basic goal of sustainable development for our impoverished millions.

Writing in *The Hindu*'s *Survey of the Environment 1992*, L.C. Jain, a former member of the Planning Commission, points out that the real culprit of environmental degradation is "the character of development which has concentrated on heaping prosperity on a small proportion of the population by indiscreet and inequitable use and command of resources for its lifestyle". The poor, he says, have no part in shaping development policies which continue to be centralised and top down in its approach. He points out that it is the 'vibrant power' of grassroots institutions that have to be allowed to flourish, for ecology and development have to be defended on a 'scale and depth and by the masses of people themselves'. He backs the Centre for Science and Environment's report, *Towards Green Villages*, which does not see environmentally sound rural development as one of only trees and watershed but "more of village institutions, laws, financial frameworks and planning processes, the key elements of not only state policy but also a national framework for people's action for environmental management and regeneration in rural areas". It is also essential that our planners keep in focus the most economicaly disadvantaged and ecologically devasted segment of the population such as rural women for example, whose strenuous lives are already stretched beyond their fragile "carrying capacities".

Ultimately it all comes down to the reality of micro planning prioritised above all other considerations and vested interests so that the road from Rio may have at least averted the tragedy of economic and ecological devastation that constantly looms over this fragile, overburdened planet. ■

(Courtesy: *The Hindu*)

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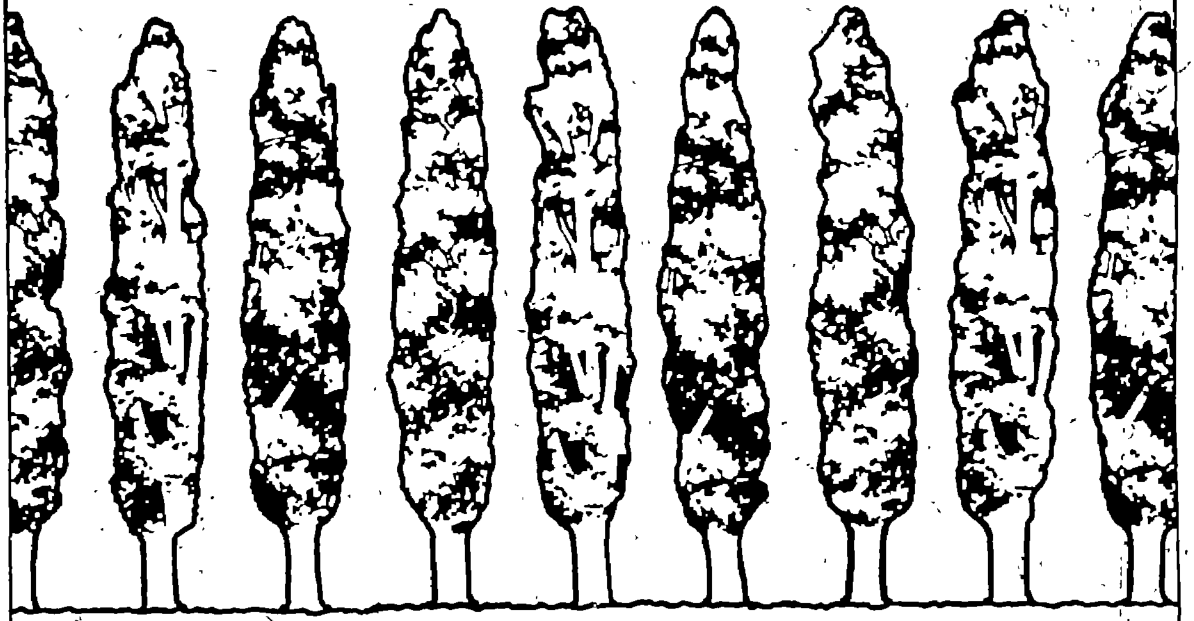

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POLITICAL NOTEBOOK

New Agenda for NAM

Less than ten years ago, in March 1983, while inaugurating the Seventh Non-Aligned Summit in New Delhi, Indira Gandhi had characterised the non-aligned movement as the largest movement for peace in the world. This she had done in the course of dilating on the measures to be undertaken to raise the struggle for nuclear disarmament and peace to new heights. That was the perspective then dictated as it was by the threat of a nuclear catastrophe in the backdrop of the renewed Cold War that began with the Soviet Union's armed intervention in Afghanistan.

Today after a decade one can justifiably claim that the NAM's call for peace and disarmament at the Seventh Non-Aligned Summit in the voice of not only Indira Gandhi but other stalwarts of the movement like Fidel Castro has borne rich fruits. The Cold War has been buried. Superpower confrontation has ended. The bipolar global structure has disappeared.

These are exceptionally positive developments. The collapse of the Soviet Union in the process (due to a variety of factors starting with the dehumanising legacy of Joseph Stalin) has no doubt removed the countervailing force which had by and large stood by the side of the Third World states on questions involving imperialist aggressions, neo-colonial depredations and fight against apartheid. But that is a different matter.

Nevertheless, while acknowledging the highly positive feature of the end of the Cold War and the consequent reinforcement of global peace, the question one needs to address at this juncture is whether the trend towards unipolarity replacing the bipolar set-up of the recent past has strengthened the security of the Third World states. Whatever the view from the North devoid of the earlier East-West divisions, the fact is that in the perception of the South, that is, the NAM states, this trend has made the world more difficult and insecure. This has been brought out in bold relief by President Suharto of Indonesia, the current Chairman of the NAM, in his speech at the inaugural ceremony of the Tenth Non-Aligned Summit at Jakarta.

What he has sought to imply is that the diminishing prospects of a nuclear holocaust following the termination of superpower confrontation have not automatically strengthened the security of the Third World. The inability of today's sole military superpower, the US, to change with the changing times and discard its time-worn tactics of blackmail has once again made the developing NAM states vulnerable; at the same time, due to the adoption of such policies Washington has become increasingly suspect in the eyes of the Third World. That is precisely one of the basic reasons for the NAM's continuance and validity. For, as a united entity of the developing world refusing to kowtow to foreign directives aimed at curtailing, mortgaging and surrendering the sovereignty of the independent states that emerged from the debris of the colonial empires, the NAM's relevance is

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indisputable precisely now when the US' urge for establishing its hegemony stands exposed from the moves of the Western powers against Iraq in particular.

It was most appropriate indeed for the Indonesian head of state to unambiguously declare: "We must....ensure that the new world order to which leaders of the industrialised countries often refer does not turn out to be a new version of the same old pattern of domination of the strong over the weak and the rich over the poor." He was equally forthright in spelling out the NAM's approach to the issue of conditionalities: "Industrialised countries unilaterally set these conditionalities and often expand their scope to cover questions of democracy and human rights applying only their own criteria which may not be appropriate. The same is true in the case of defence spending. On this form of unilateralism, I sincerely believe that the non-aligned movement must take a firm stand."

Dr Suharto's proposal for a high level NAM working group to suggest specific measures for restructuring the United Nations is noteworthy inasmuch as it seeks to make the movement action-oriented.

The tone of the Tenth Summit having thus been set, the summiteers have to work out a new agenda for maintaining and promoting non-aligned unity in the face of Western machinations to divide individual member-states on ethnic lines (as are to be seen in the disturbing and tragic events in Yugoslavia and Afghanistan as well as the feverish activities against Iraq), and ensure enhancement of neo-colonial exploitation of the NAM constituents through the multilateral financial institutions. Notwithstanding its domestic policies especially in the economic sphere that seek to weaken its independence and sovereignty, India under Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao is publicly committed to play a vital role in this entire exercise. In his speech the Prime Minister himself pointed to the danger and untenability of the multilateral agencies attaching non-economic strings to the credit to developing countries. Such a statement and effective interventions with the purpose of making the summit declaration shed its defensive stance and acquire an assertive character are doubtless welcome in the wake of Western pressures. However, these need to be followed up in a sustained manner in multifarious ways in the years to come. This is imperative in the realm of building South-South cooperation as well.

Whatever may be the necessity to counter the Pakistani strategy of raising the Kashmir issue at this summit, India should not allow itself to be deflected from pursuing its main objectives in the non-aligned movement. These objectives are intimately related to the new agenda the NAM members are striving to unfold at Jakarta.

September 2 S.C.

Mainstream Thirty Years Old

Thirty years ago, on September 1,1962, Mainstream *made its quiet debut without any fanfare.*

It was not just an impetuous initiative taken on the spur of a moment. It was the product of years of consultation and interaction among like-minded friends, all concerned at the progressive corrosion of our politics since independence Whatever might have been the political or ideological inclinations of individual friends involved in the project, the journal has throughout been sought to be kept as a national forum unattached to any political formation

The twin guiding principles that Mainstream *has endeavoured to follow are the imperatives of national interests and the upholding of national self-respect National interests, in our conviction, constitute the interests of the overwhelming majority of the nation, and not just the interests of the well-placed minority at the top And the sense of national self-respect, in our perception, amounts to safeguarding the proud heritage of our freedom struggle.*

Today as we look back at these thirty years of silent but unwavering efforts to keep up Mainstream *without interruption, we are overwhelmed by the wide range of support from the entire spectrum of our national life, in which have participated persons of national eminence alongwith a very large number of those in distant corners engaged in pursuits for bettering the life and living of the deprived millions of our country. With all its drawbacks and shortcomings,* Mainstream *has steadfastly held on to its integrity, never having wavered by threats or blandishments.*

The journey ahead for Mainstream *is no less onerous and daunting, demanding fresh resources—both material and human—not only to keep up the traditions it has so long tried to sustain but to enrich them as well. There has, therefore, to be a fresh endeavour at making the journal more purposeful so that it may in its own way be able to make its modest contribution towards the building of a better future for our great nation.*

On the occasion of this journal's thirtieth birthday, we salute all friends and well-wishers who in various ways have helped to sustain Mainstream *and, we are confident, will come forward to carry it towards a Better Tomorrow.*

N.C

Kashmir Crisis

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

For long it has been fashionable to talk about the Kashmir crisis as the most intractable challenge before the country and yet do pretty little to deal with it and thereby let the blood-letting go on. Recently, however, one notices some stir in diverse circles both at home and abroad to tackle the Kashmir problem. A feeling appears to have crept in both within the government and in the Opposition that Kashmir can no longer be kept on the back-burner. This sense of urgency has to a large measure been accelerated by Pakistan's mounting pressure on both the diplomatic and political fronts.

The Prime Minister himself publicly mentioned in his August 15 address from the Red Fort about his "keenness to hold free and fair elections within the framework of the Indian Constitution and to instal a popular government" in the trouble-tossed State. The Union Home Minister on his part too has been talking about the possibility of holding elections in Jammu and Kashmir within the next six months. It needs to be noted that the President's rule in Kashmir cannot be continued indefinitely: it has to end by September next year.

Of late there has been quite a lot of activity in the Opposition camp too about what's to be done in Kashmir. Recently the National Conference leader, Dr Farooq Abdullah, and the Janata Dal leader, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, spent sometime in Srinagar, and on their return, a meeting was held at Mufti's place to discuss the critical situation of the Kashmir Valley which was attended by most of the top leaders who included V.P. Singh and Bommai, Surjeet and Indrajit Gupta and Murasoli Maran from the DMK. Also present was Iftikar Ansari, the Congress leader in the now-defunct Assembly, who is an influential Shia leader of the Valley. The assessment at the meeting was that the militants practically run the show in the Valley while the Army and the para-military forces are only holding on to the terrain but have practically lost the populace. The consensus among these Opposition leaders was that no election would be possible in the Kashmir Valley unless it is preceded by some thaw in the situation, some opening of political activity which, in its turn, could be possible only if the government could indicate about the extent of autonomy it would be prepared to grant to the State. The Opposition leaders are reported to have apprised the Prime Minister about their assessment and have left the matter in his court.

It is generally conceded in the official circles that while the Army and the para-military forces can indefinitely hold on to the Valley, no matter how much it costs in terms of resources and manpower it is not possible to dislodge the armed militants except by means of the political process.

It needs to be acknowledged that the Kashmir crisis has four facets each of which has a distinct angle, and it is only through the management of these four can there be a viable solution of the Kashmir problem. These are: the situation in the Kashmir Valley itself; the international facet, particularly with relation to the US and the UK; the Pakistani facet and its impact on the Indo-Pak relations; and lastly, its bearing on the home front, that is, on the Indian politics as a whole.

The actual situation in the Kashmir Valley is that all civic activities are controlled by militants—in some area by one militant group, in another area by another militant group. The Indian Army guards the frontier along Pakistan, but the terrain is mostly mountainous and it becomes almost impossible to prevent continuous infiltration of militants from the Pakistani side. Inside the Valley, the Indian police and para-military forces have to clash most of the time with the militants, and the administration is practically at a standstill. There are reports of local administration having been infiltrated by the militant agents. Many people sympathise with militants, giving them shelter. Even those in the villages and towns who do not want any armed clashes, do not condemn the militants. Propaganda among the public in the Valley is mostly hostile to the Indian Government.

The clashes between militant groups and Indian forces were a little lower in the period of May and June this year. But they have grown more in August, and it was difficult for the Indian authorities to hold any function to mark the Indian Independence Day on August 15. Only a flag hoisting could be managed under tight military security.

The militants in the Kashmir Valley are broadly of three groups:

The Hizbe Islami which is the most fanatic group and is affiliated to the Jamaat-e-Islami of Pakistan. They want that the Kashmir Valley must be merged into Pakistan. They get direct support in arms and training from Pakistan.

The second group is the Al-Jehad which is also obscurantist. However, they are not openly campaigning for annexation to Pakistan, but take an ambivalent position, though fiercely against Delhi.

The third group is the JKLF (Jammu-Kashmir Liberation Front) which wants that the entire State of Jammu and Kashmir (including the portion of Kashmir now occupied by Pakistan) must become an independent State, and be attached to neither India nor Pakistan.

Of these three groups, the JKLF is the most popular among the Muslim population in the Kashmir Valley, and the Hizbe Islami is the least popular in the Valley. But the the Hizbe Islami has the largest stock of weapons and the JKLF has the smallest stock of weapons. The Pakistan Government gives weapons and training to all the militant groups so that the Indian Government forces are harrassed to the maximum possible extent, but actually the Pakistan Government gives the maximum possible support and weapons to Hizbe Islami, most of whose militant cadres actually come from Pakistan. The Pakistan Government does not fully trust the JKLF leaders, but because the JKLF is popular in Kashmir, it gives them limited quantity of weapons to combat the Indian forces. It is to be noted that in the area of Kashmir now under Pakistan's occupation, the JKLF faces persecution on many occasions from the Pakistani authorities, because the Pakistan Government, particularly the ISI, does not permit the JKLF to campaign for independence of Kashmir from both India and Pakistan. It is worth noting that unlike the other two militant formations, the JKLF acknowledges that the Hindu population who had to leave the Valley in large numbers three years ago should be brought back and their houses restored to them.

In the present situation, none of the major parties function in the Valley. All their leaders are out of the Kashmir Valley—either in Jammu or in Delhi. The cadres of these major parties are inactive though they have not left the Valley. They on their own cannot resist the militants. They want their leaders to come and then they may risk holding a mass campaign. At present, it is impossible for any leader to attack or criticise the militants. But it is possible to appeal to the militants that instead of killing people, let there be discussion about the future of Kashmir.

It is in this context that one has to take into account Dr Farooq Abdullah's recent interview to the BBC in which he clearly distanced himself from New Delhi and said that any discussion on the future of Kashmir has to include besides India and Pakistan, the Kashmiri leaders too. Broadly, this is perhaps meant to evoke a positive response from the JKLF and thereby undermine the base of the fanatical Hizbe Islami.

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WHILE this is roughly the situation on the ground, the international facet of the Kashmir crisis can hardly be ignored. The British public, including the Labour Party, at one stage echoed the viewpoint of the militants, laying particular stress on the violation of human rights in the Valley by the Indian armed forces. This was sought to be countered by the official Indian stand which pointed to the violence indulged in by the militants. This approach by New Delhi had a marginal impact on the Western public.

On the part of the US, Washington has clarified that it disapproved of Pakistan's interference in the affairs of Kashmir. At the same time, it has been pressing for a settlement between India and Pakistan over the Kashmir issue. Though no specific proposals for such a settlement has so far officially emanated from Washington, it appears that the ground is sought to be prepared through non-official overtures. It is in this context that the recent thesis by a Carnegic Fellow, James Clad, has attracted a lot of attention. It wants the present line of control to be recognised as the international frontier thereby sanctifying the partition of Kashmir, with some area being ceded by Pakistan on the southern side, while India reciprocating by ceding claim on the north, that is, legitimising the present Sino-Pak deal. One can only say that the James Clad proposal is in the nature of a trial balloon, but it does indicate the likelihood of prodding from the West for a settlement of Kashmir. One more pressure point for New Delhi.

The Pakistan angle was spelt out by its Foreign Secretary during his recent talks with his counterpart in New Delhi, when he said Kashmir is "the core issue" of dissonance between the two countries. By the very tenets of the so-called two-nation theory—which forms the ideological platform for the existence of Pakistan—Kashmir with its Muslim majority population contiguously located must belong to the state of Pakistan. This is precisely the reason why the Pakistan authorities are dead set against the JKLF which wants independence for Kashmir, because, any acquiescence to the demand for independence of Kashmir would be a body-blow on the two-nation theory. Further, the right of Kashmiris as a distinct ethnic group to independence, is a matter of utmost threat for the very integrity of Pakistan. Once the Kashmiri people are allowed to be independent because of a distinct ethnic identity, how could the claims of the Baluchis, the Sindhis and the Pakhtoons be denied? And if that is permitted to happen, Pakistan will be reduced to a bloated Punjabi Suba, and nothing more.

Viewed from this angle, BJP leader Dr Murli Manohar Joshi's suggestion for isolating the Muslim majority Kashmir Valley from Jammu and Ladakh—however rational it may appear—unwittingly helps to strengthen Pakistan's ideological stand behind its Kashmir policy.

Lastly comes the impact of the Kashmir crisis on the Indian political scene. The Congress, the Janata Dal and the Left feel that there should be more autonomy for Kashmir without which militants cannot be controlled. There is, however, no clear view yet as to the degree of autonomy to be given. The Congress feels that if too much autonomy is given to Kashmir, the same demand will come from other parts of India.

The BJP is opposed to granting any autonomy to Kashmir. It wants to cancel even Article 370 of the Indian Constitution which gives a very limited degree of autonomy to Kashmir. The BJP's view in the main is that the Muslim population in Kashmir is unreliable and acts as the agent of Pakistan, and they must not be pampered. It needs to be noted that of all the political parties, the BJP commands preponderant support among the large body of Hindu refugees. From the Valley—numbering early three lakhs—who have been living in miserable plight, and whose return has become essential for establishing normalcy in the State of Jammu & Kashmir.

Prime Minister Narasimha Rao is, therefore, faced with the dilemma that even if all other parties agree to concede autonomy to Kashmir, the BJP can whip up campaign against it all over India and say that the Rao Government is surrendering territory to a Muslim population which is anti-Indian. All this may lead to a heightening of communal tension.

It is thus imperative that the building of a national consensus on Kashmir acceptable to all parties in the country becomes the crucial responsibility of all concerned, not only of the Prime Minister but all parties including the BJP. The alternative may be disastrous for the nation as a whole, because the present blood-letting can only end up in the disintegration of not only the picturesque Valley but a blow to India's unity as well. We, all of us, have to bestir ourselves before the grandeur of autumn in the Valley yields to the rigours of a snow-bound winter in three months from now. ■

Inflation: Illusion and Reality

SATYA NARAIN

Containment of inflation is an important conditionality attached to the loan facility the International Monetary Fund has provided to the government to enable it to pursue its economic reforms programme. Specifically, the target set is a single digit rate of inflation for the current financial year as against the double digit rate, exceeding 13 per cent, in 1991-92.

The "fall" in this rate to 9.1 per cent in the week ending August 1 and further to 8.7 in the following week will seem to suggest that the target is not only within reach but has, in fact, been already achieved. The Finance Ministry's Chief Economic Consultant, Dr Ashok Desai, has even boldly predicted that the inflation rate will be below eight per cent by next month. However, the appearence is sometimes deceptive and it may be so in this case as well. There is, in any case, more than a reasonable doubt about the price situation indeed being as reassuring as Dr Desai or other official spokesmen claim it to be. Not only does one swallow not make a summer, the basis on which the claim is made is fragile and methodologically unsound.

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THE single digit rates of inflation in the two weeks ending August 8 have been calculated on a point-to-point basis, that is, by the increase in the index of the wholesale prices in the period has registered over the figures for the corresponding weeks last year. This, to say the least, is an unscientific method to measure the inflation rate since it takes into account positions at only two points which could represent an exceptional situation or elements. The fact that the lower figures thus arrived at are lower only because of a much higher rate in the corresponding periods last year makes them an inadequate barometer to measure the inflationary pressures ravaging the economy at present. They are also only provisional and hence sure to be revised upwards, as provisional price indices invariably are, and this is another reason for not overrating their significance.

A more rational method to measure price inflation is to compare the price index in a particular week with that in the previous week or even month which can provide a better insight into the situation on this front—whether the price curve is moving up or showing a downward trend. Viewed in this light, the position becomes totally different. The week ending August 1, which is supposed to have shown the inflation rate at below 10 per cent, also witnessed the higher price spurt for a single week in the first seven months of the current calendar year. This spurt was as high as 0.6 per cent which, by any standard, is an alarming figure for one week. If the price level continues to rise at this rate the monthly spurt will be about 2.4 per cent and the inflation rate for the full year, a highly disconcerting 28.8 per cent.

Even more disquieting than this continued upward trend of the prices in general is their steeper rise in the case of articles of mass consumption like foodgrains, including pulses and oilseeds, vegetables and fruits with the group comprising these items, as also eggs and other essential products, registering an increase of 0.8 per cent in a single week. The rise in the case of even manufactured products was a substantial 0.6 per cent which, again, is not a minor increase.

It is only in the case of fuel, power, light and lubricants that the index for the week had remained unchanged, but with most of these articles having administered prices, this is not surprising. The stability in their case was attained at the cost of the exchequer which has traditionally been subsidising their prices for economic and often political reasons. The projected full convertibility of the rupee on trade account may not permit this indulgence by the state because of the upward push it will give to the cost of imports, especially of petroleum products, showing how precarious and even deceptive is this partial stability of the prices noticeable in some areas.

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ANOTHER significant factor cautioning against overblowing the so-called single digit rate of inflation is its being the rate of the rise in the wholesale price index. The consumer price index, which really is relevant for the people, has continued to move upward at a double digit rate with the increase in June, the latest month, for which data are available, being as high as 12.9 per cent. That it was two percentage points lower than its level in the beginning of the year offers no consolation when the base on which it has been rising was already high. With the recent increase in procurement prices of foodgrains and their inevitable follow-up in the spurt in market prices, this rate of price rise is bound to scale new heights making nonsense of the government's claim that it has been able to stem the tide of inflation.

Even if the government's claim about last year's galloping inflation having been bridled is accepted at its face value, how does the government hope to sustain the fall?

As already pointed out, both the foodgrains and oil products are bound to register increases in their prices in the wake of the rupee's convertibility and the reduction of subsidies for fertilisers and other inputs as part of the restructuring programme. Also, the prospects on the food front, although not as bleak as they had appeared to be till recently, are by no means bright. The depletion of the food stock with the offical agencies and shortfall in procurement of staples like wheat and rice too will not make things easier for the government.

There is, in any case, a limit beyond which restraints on demand, which have been the main plank of the Government's policy to contain inflation, cannot be imposed without affecting production all round. The alternative of taking care of these adverse consequences through increase in state spending will also not be available to the government because of an inadequacy of resources and, in case it wants to augment them through new taxes, the inflationary impact of the indirect ones among them.

Viewed in this perpective, the government's attempt to pass off a slight downturn in the rate of inflation—and that too when measured on a point-to-point basis—as a significant achievement, is an exercise in self-delusion. The government has no justification whatsoever to gloat over what essentially is a statistical mirage and has no relevance insofar as the situation on the ground is concerned. What is more, there is no firm indication as yet of this situation turning better, nor even a hint of a policy framework to improve it.

A spurt in prices is inherent in the economic restructuring of which the guiding principle is "free marketism" and it is meaningless to expect it to be even contained, let alone eliminated, without keeping the economy, both in its production and distribution aspects, under a degree of social discipline. ■

COMMUNICATION

Devaluation of President's Awards

The President's Awards like Bharat Ratna, Padma Bhushan and so on have been devalued completely. These awards are given to all and sundry, including crooks and criminals, although such awards are given to a few decent deserving ones too as a concession or perhaps to soften the blow.

It may be recalled that V. Krishnamurthy, now involved in Harshad Mehta's mega-scam, was awarded 'Padma Bhushan' by our last President, R. Venkataraman, who often protested against being called a 'Rubber Stamp'. Had this mega-scam not been exposed, our 'Rubber Stamp' President Venkataraman would have awarded even 'Bharat Ratna' to Harshad Mehta this year!

All decent and deserving persons who have received the President's Awards over these years should return them, if they want to save their dignity and self-respect and would not like to be bracketed with crooks and criminals who have also been the recipients of such honours.

August 17, 1992

Bhagavati Co-op Housing Society
Yari Road, Versova, Bombay-400 061.

Savita Bankeshwar-Karnad
Smita Harish Chandaver

Baseless

I am sorry to have to defend myself against Achyut Patwardhan who, in his last article reprinted in your issue of August 15, has identified me with Muslim communalism and accused me of inciting Muslim students of the Jamia Millia Islamia in the Mushirul Hasan controversy. All I can say about my role in the Jamia crisis, which is well documented, is that the charge of 'incitement' is totally baseless and unjustified.

As for Achyut Patwardhan's perception of Muslim communalism, he appears to share a mind-set which sees no contradiction between *Hindutva* and secularism, believes that only Hindus are, or can be, secular and in fact defines secularism in terms of homogenisation, assimilation and Hinduisation.

August 22, 1992

14 Janpath
New Delhi-110001

Syed Shahabuddin

Rooted on the Banks of the Rubicon

ANAND SHARMA

South Africa is once again at the crossroads in its quest for a humane and equitable order. The forward march of its transition into a non-racial and democratic society has come to a abrupt halt.

When the democratic forces were awaiting an agreement for an Interim Government the signal which emerged from the CODESA was one of paralysis and the resolve of the present government to preserve White privileges and power. This impasse and the ongoing carnage has led to a virtual collapse of the negotiations causing widespread disappointment and concern. Hope of yesterday is replaced by anxiety and the prevailing situation can only be termed as complex and volatile.

Only six years ago, the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group on South Africa had warned that failure to arrive at negotiated settlement will engulf South Africa in a racial conflagration with frightening implications. Today this threat is looming large over the South African horizon.

The horrendous massacre at Boipatong has finally buried the fragile understanding between the government and the ANC and the country is slowly drifting towards an abyss. During my two week stay in South Africa I witnessed a strong wave of anger and resentment sweeping the country. President de Klerk's image of a great reformer has taken a severe battering. Earlier doubts persisted over the Pretoria regime's sincerity and commitment to democratic change. Now there is a growing convocation about the existence of a double agenda to delay transition and the governments calculated adherence to it.

The developments primarily responsible for this slide are: the unabated cycle of violence, the divergent positions on the guiding principles for a future Constitution and the modalities for the adoption of a democratic Constitution. It is essential to analyse these:

Negotiations

Contrary to expectations that the outcome of the March referendum will accelerate the transition process, it led to a hardening of attitude of the ruling National Party. That the government had moved consciously away from meaningful negotiations is reflected in its proposals at the CODESA. The present impasse in the negotiations is due mainly to:

(i) The refusal of the government to abide by its commitment to democracy indicated in the signing of the declaration of intent at the CODESA Convention for a Democratic South Africa.

(ii) An intricate strategy devised by the government to secure a minority veto which would subvert a genuine democracy.

The deadlock has been given the appearance of a minor difference of a few percentage points but the real reason is the National Party's insistence on minority veto disguised as:

a) Difference on the percentage required in the Constituent Assembly to adopt the Constitution 66 per cent to 70 per cent (ANC position) and the insistence of NP on 75 per cent linked to

b) Veto role for a Second house or Senate constituting a manner which would allow NP allies to exercise the veto.

This would mean that the losers in a popular election will exercise veto over the decisions of the victors.

It may be observed that notwithstanding the internationally accepted norm of 66 per cent majority (Namibia being a recent example) the ANC accepted a majority of 70 per cent for the adoption of a Constitution.

The government had tricked all by cleverly identifying the middle ground, that is, dividing the interim phase in two parts. An agreement on the interim Government in phase I without any agreement on the Constituent Assembly, would have eternally locked the country in phase 1 under an Interim Constitution of the CODESA.

Much is said about the future and rights of the minorities. The NP is raising fears of Black domination and its proposals according to analysts are aimed at perpetuating the status quo. The ANC is for a justiceable Bill of Rights enshrined in the Constitution. Considering the background of exploitation, discrimination and denial under the apartheid regime, a political change unaccompanied by social and economic change will result in discontent and disorder.

The question, therefore, arises whether the government is at all prepared to accept the concept of majority rule. The government's acceptance of the principle of 'one man one vote' has been erroneously interpreted as concurrence to majority rule. The government's proposal is for 'power-sharing' without surrendering overall White control. Its position remains unchanged considering the fact that the government had made the same proposal to the Commonwealth EPG. This stark reality has escaped the attention of the international community.

The central issue is thus of the very acceptance of democratic majority by a government which remains rooted on the banks of the Rubicon.

The author, a former Congress MP, has all along played a highly active role in cementing India's ties with the South African populace's fight against apartheid. He has just returned after a fruitful trip to South Africa

Violence

The country is reeling under violence which has assumed alarming proportions. Conflict is inherent in the apartheid society where massacres have become a way of life. The Boipatong massacre on June 17 claimed 47 lives with pregnant women and babies as victims. Boipatong is a part of the chain of serialised killings and symbolises violence that has brutalised and desensitised an entire society. It is natural that when the lid is taken off after decades of oppression, the process of change throws up conflicting interest groups striving to carve and consolidate separate spheres of influence. The current violence can be attributed to various factors, that is, tribal rivalry, economic hardship and political divisions. It is being portrayed as internecine conflict emanating from Inkatha-ANC rivalry leading to a Zulu-Khosa divide. There is present an element of political rivalry and reprisal killings. However, to term it as ' Block on Black' violence will be oversimplification and a grave error of judgement.

Lurking behind this facade is the dark truth of police apathy and connivance. The meticulous planning behind every massacre and the organised nature of the violence reveals the presence of a third force. The pattern reveals that violence is a potent weapon available to forces bent upon sabotaging the peace process.

There have been consistent and widespread accusations of the active involvement of the police and security forces in the killings—a charge contested by the government but largely substantiated by circumstantial evidence and available facts.

It is ironic that the violence dramatically escalated at the very onset of negotiations, that is, in March 1990 and has systematically spread from Natal deep into Transvaal—the scene of recent massacres. The killings have coincided with a selective lifting of ban on carrying dangerous weapons by Inkatha supporters in the name of cultural weapons. A majority of the killings have been carried out by these weapons yet the ban has not been reimposed.

In most cases the marauders have come from hostels belonging to corporate/public sector or managed by government, where Inkatha supporters were specially accommodated. Killings in the Reef and Vaal triangle including Sebokeng, Sharpville and Boipatong are linked to 30 identified hostels from which 261 attacks have emanated during April 1990 to June 1992 claiming 4000 lives. The Statutory Commission headed by Justice Goldstone enquiring into the violence in its interim report urgently recommended fencing of the hostel and seizure of all weapons. This was ignored by the government resulting in a public expression of distress by the Commission. Invariably the perpetrators have gone scot free. Few who were arrested after public outcry were acquitted for lack of evidence with the Courts recording non-cooperation of the police. The police-Inkatha nexus is now universally known after the proof of police funding of Inkatha.

It is pertinent to mention the case of Kwamadala hostel linked to much violence in the Vaal area. Proof exists of repeated memorandums by the Council of churches to the authorities and police as well as of complaints by township residents, yet for unexplained reasons the police chose not to act till two weeks after the Boipatong tragedy.

Equally significant is the presence of dreaded mercenary units which are centrally controlled. These include the Portugese-speaking Battalion 32 used earlier in Angola, the Renamo elements of Mozambique, the Koevoet of Namibia and the Seles Scouts of erstwhile Rhodesia. Interestingly, most of the attackers in the train killings spoke dialects alien to South Africa and elements from within the police have charged the mercenary units of the crime. The Goldstone Commission has severely indicted the police and called for the immediate withdrawal of special units from the townships. The Commission's recommendation has been rejected by the Commissioner of Police, General Van de Merwe.

Reports of various observer groups and the International Commission of Jurists on direct police involvement have been rejected by Pretoria as partisan. The recent report of the Human Rights Commission is most damning on police complicity in massacres. It lists the following similar characteristics and objectives of massacres: Inkatha's drive to establish political territory and influence, extreme terror tactics employed to disorganise and paralyse township communities. Hostels were the launching pads and eye witnesses claim involvement of security forces and involvement of unidentified Whites in the violence.

The only reasonable inference which may be drawn from the aforesaid facts and reports is of the involvement of security forces. The failure of the government to act against the guilty police officers and refusal to disband mercenary units tantamount to tacit approval. It also exposes President de Klerk to the charge of connivance which must be dispelled for the sake of South Africa's future.

President de Klerk must realise the futility of defending a police whose credibility is zero. This government must not delude itself. Denials and defence of security forces will only discredit the government. What is needed today is a resolute and sincere action to overhaul the police. To gain the respect of its citizens the government must have a demonstrated control of the security forces which are able to protect the lives of the people.

Contrary to the prevailing impression, the fundamental question of reversibility or irreversibility of the process is not yet decided. The legislation passed by Parliament in the last week of May, authorising detention without trial, solitary confinement and unrestricted bugging of the phones/houses make the government intention suspect. The lingering threat of the reimposition of Emergency remains intact.

Mass Action

Responding to the prevailing mood in the country the

(Continued on page 26)

After Fortyfive Years

Hope turns to Despair

H.K. DUA

Fortyfive years ago India woke to freedom. Hope and idealism filled the air. The people, proud of their heritage and their dreams, took the vow to build a new India. Independence meant something to them as Jawaharlal Nehru spoke about India's tryst with destiny.

Fortyfive years later despair has replaced hope and cynicism has overtaken the dreams. The nation is passing through a period of uncertainty and drift which, if not halted, can lead to dangerous consequences, possibly chaos.

What can freedom mean to those who even now do not get two meals a day; or to those who have bonded their children in slavery to weave carpets in Mirzapur; or to the landless who continue to work on other peoples' lands for the right to live a bony existence? What can freedom mean to those who have to sleep under the flyovers in big cities or stand in endless queues at employment exchanges where promise of a job is punched on the card year after year.

Some promised Ram Rajya, others socialism. '*Garibi Hatao*' was the name of another game that was played on the people. But the fact is that despite 45 years of independence our people are one of the poorest in the world. We still have the largest number of illiterates in the world. People still die because of lack of healthcare or because of their inability to buy a handful of grain. Poverty line is subject of trendy seminars and workshops organised by those who do not know what it means to be poor.

At the time of independence our leaders dreamt the right dreams. They wanted to build a strong united India where no one would have to beg for food, where no one would suffer because of accident of birth, where no one would kill another simply because he speaks another language or believes in another God. That was another day, distant and perhaps on a different time-scale.

What we see now is an India worried whether it can survive as one nation. The accident of birth still decides the rest of a citizen's life, and of his children. People continue to kill others for passions that ought to have been spent on building a life of harmony and peace.

And it is not only at Barcelona the world is laughing at this nation of 850 million people and its incapacity to stand up and be counted among others.

One does not know whom to blame for the mess the country is caught in—the people or the leaders. Maybe we get the rulers we deserve. But that is the argument of those who believe in fatalism or have the tendency to meekly accept or rationalise what they cannot cure. The Law of Karma is always handy for a vast number of our people to accept what ought to have been rejected by them. Maybe it is the men who rule us are responsible for the messy situation India is placed in. They say they are servants of the people and our people, gullible as ever, believe them. Many promises have turned out to be false and those who have held these out are merely seekers of pelf and power.

What is happening in Punjab and Kashmir? To believe that there is no threat to the nation's unity would be suicidal. Yet what we get is pronouncements of the government's resolve: "We will protect the nation's unity and territorial integrity." The people do not know whether to laugh at the vacuity of such statements or to cry for those who have lost their kith and kin.

The people, as full of vigour and patriotism as of Punjab were famous for, are caught in the crossfire of the terrorists who have made a business of their daily killings and the men in uniform who have for eight long years been unable to stop them from giving up the guns. Fear stalks the roads, the knock on the door leads to worried whispers in the house. The government salves its conscience by replacing one Governor with another, transferring the local police chief, or if someone's brainwave works, putting on a convenient serial on Doordarshan.

Our leaders—whether in the Congress party or in the Opposition—left Punjab free for the wielders of gun long back. The space vacated by the political parties has been filled by the terrorists on the one side and the security forces on the other. The result: absence of the boisterous Punjabi laughter.

The story is no different in Kashmir. The threat to the country's integrity is perhaps more serious there than elsewhere.

The situation is not on the boil in the North-East, but you have to visit the North-East for a few days to feel the intensity of alienation among the people there. For them, Delhi is a distant, far away spot on the map. The question is not just the tackling of insurgency in Manipur or Nagaland; perhaps our security forces have the confidence to live up to their vow that they will deal with any threat to the nation's territorial integrity. But does anyone in Delhi think what breeds insurgency in the North-East?

Who cares? It does not occur to our leaders in the government or those adorning the Opposition benches, that Punjab and Kashmir are national problems and require not the pointing of finger at each other but the pooling of heads so that a solution may be found.

Leaving it to the Army or the security forces is too often found an easy way out. No one feels ashamed of the implicit failure of the political or the civil authority in tackling a local situation that ought to have been anticipated and handled well in time. The Army is handling tasks in Punjab and Kashmir and in the North-East for a long time now. But only the other day it was supposed to be on the alert at as quiet a place as Shimla or at Thiruvananthapuram which had not seen communal strife earlier. During the Mandal agitation days, town after town was given to the Army to control. The colonels did restore calm but you have to listen to what they say afterwards about our politicians. The outpouring of their cynicism is generally not complimentary to the men who have come to rule by the mandate of the people.

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DOES it occur to our Ministers why they have to live behind barbed wire or to go to the inaugural functions with black cats surrounding them? Yes, security has to be ensured for them. But why should this state of-affairs arise at all when representatives of the people cannot move around among the people without escorts armed with stenguns? Why does it not occur to our leaders that fences they have built—or have had to build—around themselves have cut them away from the people they are supposed to lead? The barbed wire may be providing some protection to the men behind it but they do not realise that they have in a way become prisoners who are afraid of freedom. The barriers between the rulers and the ruled are more than symbolic. Perhaps it does not occur to our leaders why the same people who would respond to their calls before independence now laugh at their antics or the self-indulgent indifference they are wallowing in. The leaders' greed, pettiness, ambitions and obsessions with power can match the size of the scandals that are flourishing at various levels of public life.

What about the institutions? Parliament is no longer as effective as it used to be. It is unable to check the misuse of power for personal ends or become the voice of the people. The judiciary no longer enjoys the prestige it used to. Its contribution to dispensing justice apart, it does not know how it should tackle the simple case of one of its brother judges who allegedly made no distinction between what is meant for his office use and what is for his personal benefit. The executive is often getting away with the arbitrary use of power, often unchecked by Parliament or the judiciary. The Press, which is perhaps more vigilant than the vital organs of the state meant for sustaining democracy, is developing tendencies that could cost it its credibility and some day its independence.

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Yet only a few are bothered about all this. As a nation, we are a smug people. We don't anticipate dangers and often we react when it is too late. This nation always rises to the occasion, unmindful of the risks that improvised responses entail. One of the beliefs is that having achieved independence, democracy is for ever safe in this country. We are not perhaps able to grasp the dangers our democratic set-up is fast running into.

Terrorism is posing a threat to not only the unity of the country, it has also brought to the fore dangers for a democratic way of life in Punjab and Kashmir. Those who are going about in Punjab and Kashmir gun in hand striking fear are taking away the citizens' right to live.

Violence negates democracy and there is more of it now and is fairly widespread. What makes a tolerant people kill each other needs to be pondered. But some things are clear. You cannot have a over 400 million people illiterate, ignorant, underemployed and underfed believe in democracy for too long. Somewhere there is a link between poverty and violence. And you cannot ask a man without a job not to feel angry simply because Mahatma Gandhi said anger and violence are bad for the country and the people.

The creative energy of the youth could have been used for building a better India, but the underlying presumption is that our political parties are led by creative leaders. Do we have leaders who can inspire our young men and women to join the adventure of building a new India?

More boys and girls are certainly becoming doctors, engineers, scientists. But isn't it a fact many a youngman is joining local mafia leaders who are out to use muscle power to capture polling booths for the local *netas* in State after State? The youth can build a nation, creatively used, but in a state where idealism has given way to naked pursuit of money and power, young men and women will become liable to be exploited by fundamentalists, secessionists, communalists, gun wielders and leaders of criminal groups who are all out to destroy one of the greatest experiments in building a nation through democratic means.

But who cares? We can always celeberate something or the other. We have just begun the yearlong celebrations of the 'Quit India' movement's golden jubilee. We have celebrated our fortysixth Independence Day. History is often the refuge of those who have not done much themselves to celebrate. Recalling past achievements comes handy to the generations which want to obscure present failures. Are we not the generation that failed? ■

(Courtesy: *The Hindustan Times*)

Total Literacy Campaign

Still an Unwritten Chapter in Indian History

LAKSHMIDHAR MISHRA

September 8 being the International Literacy Day we are publishing the following article in instalments to mark the occasion.

—Editor

The National Literacy Mission (NLM) was launched on May 5, 1988 by the former Prime Minister, the late Rajiv Gandhi, at a formal function held at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi. The National Literacy Mission Authority (NLMA), having two wings, namely a Council and an Executive Committee, was formed in June 1988. Two months later in a meeting in August 1988, K.R. Rajan, the then Collector and District Magistrate, Ernakulam, exuded lot of confidence that a Total Literacy Campaign (TLC) was possible, feasible and achievable in India and that beginning could be made in Ernakulam. Despite initial reservations, the proposal was supported by the NLMA and the State Government and a campaign for total literacy in Ernakulam was launched on January 26, 1989. The campaign, which was implemented by the Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad, was a collaborative effort between the District Administration and non-governmental organisations and was successfully concluded in December 1989. On February 4, 1990, Ernakulam was declared as the first fully literate district in the country, making 1.35 lakh potential learners out of 1.85 lakh reach the NLM levels of literacy and numeracy and raising the rate of literacy of Ernakulam from 77 per cent to 98 per cent. It is on this day that a campaign for total literacy was also launched for the entire Kerala State by the then Prime Minister of India, V.P. Singh, who had earlier launched the International Literacy year (ILY) on January 22, 1990 reinforcing the solidarity and support of the government to the NLM.

Successful accomplishment of the TLC in Ernakulam and taking up the TLC venture for the entire Kerala State with so much of political will and commitment acted as a powerful springboard and spurred several State Governments, District Administrations and voluntary organisations to launch similar initiatives in the direction of total literacy. The whole process was facilitated by the formation of a non-governmental organisation called the "Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti" in August 1989 and reinforced by a countrywide caravan for literacy in the period spanning October 2, 1990 and November 14, 1990 known as the Bharat Gyan Vigyan Jatha sponsored and executed by the Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti and another caravan for literacy in the five States of Assam, Bihar, MP, Orissa and UP sponsored and executed by the Gandhian and Sarvodaya organisations. The two caravans taken out at one of the most difficult periods of Indian history had succeeded to a large extent to spread the message of literacy and science for self-reliance, to create the desired churning in favour of literacy and lifelong continuing education and to inculcate a rational, secular and scientific temper alongwith values of national concern such as national integration, small family norm, women's equality and conservation of environment. These will remain as two important milestones in the history of literacy and adult education in India and the world.

The author, a Joint Secretary in the Department of Education under the Union Ministry of Human Resource Development, is the Director-General of the National Literacy Mission. The views expressed in this paper are entirely those of the author and not those of the Ministry.

Ernakulam had an infective effect on other districts and TLCs in Bijapur and Dakshina Kannada in Karnataka, Burdwan and Midnapur in West Bengal, Karaikal, Mahe, Yanam and Pondicherry in the UT of Pondicherry and the State of Goa followed in quick succession. During the last three and a half years since the launching of the TLC Ernakulam, the number of TLC projects and TLC districts has grown progressively and as on August 1, 1992, as many as 106 projects involving 165 districts have been approved by the Executive Committee of the NLMA for being covered under the TLC, which is an impressive indication by any account. While the State of Kerala and the UT of Pondicherry were declared as fully literate on April 18, 1991 and November 30, 1991 respectively raising the rates of literacy to 93.5 per cent and 89.5 per cent respectively, the districts of Bijapur and Dakshin Kannada in Karnataka; Chittor and Nellore in Andhra Pradesh; Burdwan, Midnapore, Hooghly, Virbhum, North 24-Parganas and Bankura in West Bengal, Sindhudurg and Wardha in Maharashtra, Gandhinagar and Bhavnagar in Gujarat, Pasumpon and Pudukottai in Tamil Nadu; and Narsingpur in Madhya Pradesh have also concluded the first phase of their total literacy campaign, some successfully and some not so successfully. While some have declared themselves as fully literate in a formal ceremonial function, some have simply closed the first phase of the TLC and have started the post-literacy and continuing education phase after having shared the outcome of the first phase of the campaign with the people on whose mandate they had launched the campaign. In all, 17 projects in 33 districts have been approved for post-literacy and continuing education, while about 10 proposals for basic literacy and post-literacy (five each) are awaiting the approval of the EC, NLMA. There have been several interesting and inspiring fall-outs of these campaigns (both the TLC and the PLC) which will be enumerated at a later stage.

What has been listed above is just not a catalogue of dates and events nor a calendar of months and years when certain events were launched and certain activities took place. Each one of them represents an important milestone in the history of development of adult literacy and education in India and will continue to stand erect, evoking powerful memories, generating new hopes, faith, conviction and optimism and spurring millions to action in a new direction. Historians and politicians alike, social scientists and economists as well as media and communication experts could study these events and activities and could record them as important chronicles in the history of mankind out of the distilled wisdom which they might derive out of the TLC experiment. Regretfully, the TLCs on the whole have not found their way into the corridors of history in the same manner in which comparatively less important and rather insignificant events centering round the lives of emperors and kings, generals and ambassadors, zamindars and middlemen, courtesans and concubines have found place. What could be the reason?

II

THE question is complex and there could be no straight and simplistic answer thereto. It is well known that education is not an autonomous system; it is a sub-system of the total socio-economic and political system. To the extent, it is able to influence the structure and operations of the total system, it can be a tool of liberation of men, women and children who are often prisoners of the system. This is how lot of faith and hope has been reposed in education from time to time as an agent of bringing about a qualitative change in the lives of millions.

Education is one which liberates. Thus goes the ancient adage.

In reality, however, education has been the victim of the total system and is hardly in a position to influence the former in order to channelise it in a positive and reformative direction. The sectarian, divisive and disruptive forces which affect the total system do not spare the education system; the same fads, taboos, mercenary interests, diehard obscurantist ideas and practices which blur the vision of the total system and rob it of its elan vital also devitalise the education system and are responsible for its degeneration.

Instead of bemoaning the progressive deterioration in educational standards and its total devitalisation, it may be worthwhile to ponder over ways and means of restoring the centrality of education and according it its rightful place so that it can ensure the dignity of the individual and the unity of the nation. In countries like Myanmar, Cuba, Nicaragua, Vietnam and Ethiopia an attempt was made to restore the primacy of literacy and education through rather unconventional and unorthodox means. In these countries there was a revolution which put an end to the tyranny of the prevailing dictatorial system and which, in turn, brought about a radical change in the social, economic and political system. Education and literacy were the offshoots of that historic change. They were prompted and facilitated by the change and they came to occupy the centre-stage. In the immediate wake of change of government it was thought, and rightly so, that these countries which had been groaning under the wheels of colonialism and imperialism and had been economically ruined by years of misrule, can be put back on the rails of progress and development only if the pride and patriotism of the people could be evoked; it was also thought that there could not be a better weapon to do so than through mass education and literacy. Mass education and literacy were to be imparted in a campaign mode which involved democratisation of the entire educational process through establishment of a common school system for all races and classes, backed by a common curriculum and common medium of instruction.

This implied injection of a new awareness and consciousness based on political liberty and social and economic equality. It meant that one who knew could share with the other and particularly the women and other disadvantaged groups who have been deprived of the access to educational opportunity due to forces and circumstances beyond their control. It also implied imparting skills of economic production to the masses to prepare them to build the foundations of individual and collective self-reliance. As history has documented it, in Vietnam, backs of buffalos and brick-kilns became slates and blackboards as also shade of the trees and harvesting yards where the peasants and agricultural labourers thresh the rice. The juice extracted from the plants and the trees became the ink. In Vietnam rains and floods, in Nicaragua volcanic eruptions and red hot lava, contaminated water and gushing streams did not deter scores of learners and volunteers from plunging into the campaign for total literacy which was also a campaign for social regeneration and national reconstruction. It restored the national pride which was badly mauled by years of colonialism; it created a new society which values and prizes literacy and education as tools of social action. It reinforced the faith and belief that you can do it and you have to do it for your sheer survival and for the survival of your dear nation and countrymen.

III

BEFORE proceeding to analyse the relevance of total literacy in a campaign mode which was successfully carried out in countries like Myanmar, Cuba, Nicaragua, Vietnam and Ethiopia and drawing a worthwhile parallel, as may be appropriate to our requirement, it may be useful to examine the nomenclatural identity of literacy and adult education and whether they should be treated as co-terminus or parts of a larger system or independent entities. To state it rather firmly and without any ambiguity, *literacy and education are not co-terminus;* they may be parts of a larger system but certainly they have a uniqueness and identity of their own. To state it with further precision and clarity, literacy is a minimal even though very important entry point; it provides a gateway to the world of information, communication, modernisation, innovations and skills—life-skills, vocational-entrepreneurial skills, communication-skills, survival-skills, etc. It is essentially a tool for communication and learning, for acquiring and sharing of knowledge and information and a pre-condition for individuals' evolution and growth.

Research studies and human cognitive development have established beyond doubt that literacy enhances our 'critical consciousness' and enables us to think, analyse and reflect the existential reality of the situation in which we have been placed. It enhances our cognitive faculties. It promotes objectivity, capacity for clear perception, clear thinking and logical and coherent analysis. It promotes a sense of history and helps to combine individuality with universalisation of education. Literacy certainly includes reading, writing and arithmetic skills but it goes beyond alphabetisation. It is something deeper than mere mechanical skills of reading and writing. Understood in its broadest perspective, literacy could free us from the narrow confines of our individual pride and prejudice, ignorance, fads and taboos and direct our creative energies to flow unhindered towards a search for and discovery of the true meaning of our existence. It is a kind of open sesame which enables men and women to transcend the barriers of their restricted lives and establish an easy outreach with the wider world of information, communication, modernisation, innovations and skills.

If literacy is a sub-structure, adult education could be a super-structure. If literacy is an entry point, adult education is not the terminal point but a continuum in the direction of lifelong learning. Adults in the 15-35 age-group, who constitute the most productive segments of the society and whose acquisition of a literate status is crucial to the survival of our nascent democracy, are certainly not fools or goofs; they are intelligent, mature, sensible and often sensitive. They have a world of information and wisdom with them which may not be adequate or foolproof but could certainly be tapped for many a productive endeavour and could be profitably used to our advantage.

The education of such an adult has to be viewed somewhat differently from the education of a child who is in one of the most formative years of a human being and has, therefore, to be based on certain guiding principles. The first and the most important guiding principle is that every adult, who is not literate, is first a human being and then a learner, having the same hopes and aspirations, weaknesses and failings as any other human being. He/she operates in an environment which is not amenable to any precise regulation and which generally has not been very positive and supportive of his/ her education. Remaining illiterate is not a matter of his/her discretion of volition but due to circumstances (social, economic and cultural) often beyond his/her control. It is only when we bring ourselves down to the level of a potential learner and speak to him/her in an intelligible language, the gap separating the teacher and the learner could disappear and the urge and motivation to learn could acquire a new form.

The second guiding principle rests on understanding and internalising the nexus between the demand and the supply syndrome. No worthwhile programme of literacy can be launched without generating a demand for literacy and without creating a climate which will be positive, supportive and appreciative of literacy. Demand generation must precede delivery and demand should be generated in as simple and natural a manner as possible. Harnessing folk culture and tradition could be one of the ways which the potential learners could be aroused and awakened and an emotive bond established with literacy.

The third important guiding principle is based on an objective understanding of the interface of literacy, adult education and development. They are undoubtedly dialectically inter-related. Paulo Friere, the Brazilian revolutionary and adult educator, had as a matter of fact, redefined development and redirected the efforts of many adult educators working for social change. Being highly critical of most development efforts, he had proposed an alternative paradigm based on the development of 'critical consciousness' as different from the state of 'naive consciousness'. Julius Nyrere, yet another outstanding adult educator and the former President of Tanzania, had also perceived this nexus between literacy, adult education and development with great deal of clarity, imagination and vision. It is quite true that literacy *per se*, and even adult education at a fairly advanced stage, may not lead to a radical or qualitative change in the lives of individual learners. It may not lead to an end of the status of landlessness, assetlessness and bondage; but they can certainly be a tool of " critical conscienceness' and in that sense can be an important tool to induce or stimulate change—social, economic, cultural and even political.

The fourth guiding principle is related to the level of literacy and the stage at which post-literacy and continuing education should begin. According to a statement made by Madam Helen Butt, the level of literacy is as important or even more important than the content of literacy. We need a level which is reachable, which can be precisely and scientifically defined and which is sufficiently high to ensure retention and application. Such a level can also be described as a switch-over from the syndrome of guided-learning to that of a self-reliant learning. Post-literacy and continuing education can begin only at that stage when the fragile level of literacy has been replaced by a self-reliant level, that is one where the need for guided-learning has been fully dispensed with. It is important that there is a simultancity in planning both basic literacy and post-literacy programmes so that there is no avoidable interregnum and the latter commences quickly at the close of the former with of course adequate preparations.

Yet another principle which is important in our context is related to the issue of language. Unlike most other countries, we are in a multi-lingual situation where in addition to 15 languages listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution, we have as many as 1642 dialects, many of whom are spoken by large groups of people. No literacy or adult education strategy can be meaningful if it does not take cognisance of this multi-lingual situation and does not proceed to respect the linguistic identity and preferences of the adult learners. It is in this context that bilingualism becomes an important principle in any teaching-learning process, both for children as well as for adults. Bilingualism implies learning literacy in the dialect spoken by large groups of people at the initial or incipient stage of literacy and providing a bridge at an appropriate stage for switch-over from the spoken dialect to the state standard language.

Yet another important aspect of this principle is that since all spoken dialects may not have a script of their own, the script of the state standard language be adopted so that the process of learning literacy through that script also becomes easier for every basic learner.

IV

IT is in this perspective of a correct understanding of the inter-relationship between literacy, adult education and development that we may proceed further to critically analyse the rationale and efficacy of the campaign approach. It may be stated straightaway that there is nothing new or innovative in this approach; it is a continuation and renewal of the approach which obtained even in the pre-independence era. In the twenties, thirties and forties when the country was reeling under the weight of an oppressive colonial era, the rate of literacy was barely five per cent and in terms of absolute number, the country had millions of illiterates, who were also victims of social discrimination and economic deprivation. How could they unite and fight the colonial regime and obtain freedom for the country when they themselves were not free from the shackles and fetters of ignorance, illiteracy and bondage? It is this predicament of millions of people which had haunted the conscience of the Father of the Nation and which had made him utter those historic words with lot of anguish:

> It is a matter of sin and shame that millions in India continue to be illiterate; they have to be liberated.

Popular Ministries which were formed in the provinces in 1937, under the Act of 1935, responded to the call of the Father of the Nation and had launched mass campaigns for total literacy as well adult education programmes. These were small, isolated and scattered efforts with a limited coverage. There were, however, several silver linings. Illustratively, in Bihar a campaign, which in the words of Dr Frank Laubach can be said to be the "most impressive government campaign conducted in India in that time", was launched under the inspiring leadership of Dr Syed Mahmud. In the city of Bombay, the literacy movement was launched under the chairmanship of B.G. Kher, the Premier and Education Minister. The Mysore University unit launched a literacy campaign in 1940 and the Mysore State Literacy Council was born in 1941. Dr Frank Laubach inspired a large number of teachers in Moga in Punjab and launched a campaign "Each One Teach One" which gave rise to literacy leagues in almost all the districts of the State. The campaign-oriented movement for basic literacy during this period also gathered momentum due to the Granthshala Movement in Kerala and the Village Library Movement in several parts of the country that provided the much needed spurt for post-literacy and continuing education.

It is interesting to note that Chakravarty Rajagopalachari (popularly known as Rajaji), the then Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, had, in clear recognition of the need for post-literacy and continuing education, wrote a primer for neo-literates known as *Theambeeva* as also short stories for neo-literates *Kuttikiaagal*. People of stature like Harisarvotham Rao and Smt Durgabai Deshmukh in Andhra Pradesh, Dr Syed Mahmud in Bihar, Morarjibhai Desai, B.G. Kher and J.P. Naik in Bombay, Dr Frank Laubach in Punjab, Sir M. Visvesvaraya in Mysore, Dr Wealthy Fisher in UP and Dr Mohan Singh Mehta in Rajasthan (popularly known as Bhai Sahib), had acted as pioneers in the field of adult education and are known for their monumental contributions.

In its range and ambit, the programme has grown over the years at a remarkably rapid pace and there have been experiments with one model after another in quick succession, such as, the Gram Shikshan Mohim in Maharashtra in the late fifties, the Farmers' Functional Literacy in the late sixties, the Functional Literacy for Adult Women (FLAW) and Non-Formal Education Programme for the Youth in the early seventies, Polyvalent education for the urban slum dwellers, industrial workers and their family members under the caption of "Shramik Vidyapeeth" in the sixties and seventies, the National Adult Education Programme in the late seventies and now the National Literacy Mission in the late eighties and nineties.

Alike in the field of institutionalisation of and experimentation with one model after another, there have been changes in the content and process of literacy and adult education programmes from year to year. Each one had its own peculiarities of strategy and methodology and strengths and weaknesses in operationalisation. Illustratively, the Gram Shikshan Mohim was one of the first experiments to take literacy to the masses by way of a movement. Launched in the district of Satara in Maharashtra in 1959, it had covered as many as 25 districts of the State during the period 1961-63. In Satara where it was launched, the annual average figure of persons becoming literate increased from

3000 in 1959 to 1,00,000 in 1961. In the State as a whole, a total of 10,08,000 persons in the 14-50 years age-group in 1109 villages were made fully literate. The Mohim had aimed at total eradication of literacy, provision of library services and other materials for retention of literacy and allround development of villagers through social education centres. Even the Kothari Commission (1964-66) had acknowledged the achievements of the Mohim which harnessed the local village patriotism to eliminate literacy from the village and required the teachers and all educated men and women to work for literacy.

The enthusiasm and the tempo generated by the Mohim could not, however, be sustained due to want of adequate back-up support and services, particularly in the field of post-literacy and continuing education and there was large scale relapse of neo-literates to the old world of illiteracy. Notwithstanding this major weakness, the Mohim continues to be an important silver-lining in the history of adult education in India.

The Farmers' Functional Literacy, Functional Literacy for Adult Women and Non-Formal Education for the Youth in the sixties and seventies were essentially sectoral or departmental programmes confined to few Ministries of Education, Agriculture, Information and Broadcasting. Their scope and ambit was limited in as much as no serious effort to achieve nationwide coverage and promotion of literacy on a universal scale was either conceptualised or accomplished through these programmes.

The National Adult Education Programme launched on October 2, 1978 undoubtedly represented a major initiative in the field and a radical departure from the sectoral and departmental approaches in the past. It was intended to be a mass programme involving all sections of the society with a view to making 100 million illiterate adults literate over a period of five years, that is, 1978-83. The NAEP document was crystal clear in its perception and insight. It said:

> No country perhaps, with the exception of China, faced the problem of illiteracy of the magnitude we are facing and hardly any country has had such a long tradition of respect for learning and knowledge or the vast resources which we have.

It proceeded to add:

> The aim then would be to strive for a learning society in which life-long education is a cherished goal, a goal which is enunciated in our scriptures.

Intended to be a mass programme, the NAEP, however, remained a traditional Centre-based programme (which was also honorarium-based, hierarchical and government-funded and government-controlled). Undoubtedly it imparted a national and holistic dimension to the adult education programme (which has been later recognised in the Kothari Review Committee Report submitted to the government in April 1980), and created an infrastructural base for adult education. Given, however, the magnitude of the problem of illiteracy, its intensity and spread were limited, and given the dangers of too much of centralisation in a governmental and hierarchical mode, it failed to evoke any positive initiative and interest in the minds of numerous government functionaries and least succeeded in stirring the imagination and critical consciousness of the unlettered masses to come forward and participate in the literacy programme. The programme became a victim of its own hierarchy and outmoded rules and procedures and failed to inspire the policy formulators, opinion-moulders, representatives of the people, etc. It did attempt degovernmentalisation by encouraging involvement of voluntary agencies in implementation of the programme on a large scale but a target-oriented approach without an effective screening mechanism to screen and certify the credentials of implementing agencies brought discredit to the programme and became its major casualty. It was also shortlived inasmuch as the programme was subjected to a review even before it could barely complete one year of its existence in October 1979. Even though the review brought out several positive aspects of the programme and made several positive recommendations to impart it a new strength and resilience, it could not retrieve the same euphoria with which it was launched on October 2, 1978. The critical consciousness about the limitations of a traditional government-funded and government-controlled programme like the NAEP (which was also honorarium-based) was reinforced with submission of as many as 56 Evaluation Study Reports which had a catalogue of debits and very few credits to the programme on the one hand and also due to the projections made by the World Bank and UNESCO about the magnitude of problem of illiteracy of the country in terms of percentage as also in absolute number on the other.

◆

THE Radio broadcast of the late Rajiv Gandhi on January 5, 1985, putting women's education at the centre-stage, conceptualisation and formulation of the National Policy of Education and according a very high priority to literacy and adult education as an area of national concern therein and a detailed Programme of Action laying down the strategy of implementation of the NPE were all positive indicators of the direction in which the new government wanted to go and stimulants to the future course of action. The NLM is partly a by-product of the NPE, 1986 but largely the outcome of an evaluation of the strength and weaknesses of the NAEP by the Institutes of Social Science Research and Management; it derived its inspiration and strength from the new urge for application of the findings of scientific and technological research to improvement of the environment and pedagogy of literacy learning. In terms of content, it tried to imbibe and assimilate values of national concern which were reflected in the National Policy of Education and in terms of process, it tried to impart a new sense of urgency and seriousness by adopting the mission mode of implementation of a hitherto government programme. Soon after the Mission was launched by the late Rajiv

Gandhi on May 5, 1988, all of us, including S.G. Pitroda, who was then the Adviser to the PM (Incharge of all Technology Missions) and who continues to be so now, started, in all earnestness, the exercise to translate the laudable objective of the Mission into a reality. We did lot of introspection and asked questions to ourselves as to how a programme which was traditional in character for nearly three decades could be converted into a people's movement.

It is not as if nothing happened after the launching of the Mission. The Adviser to the PM on Technology Missions, S.G. Pitroda, had indeed assumed the gauntlet on his shoulders immediately after the formal launching. He used to take the Mission Directors to the State capitals, to the district and block headquarters to have a direct inter-personal communication with the political leaders, the administrative bureaucracy, media and the people in a climate of total openness and critical reflection. There was a lot of learning through sharing to search for a workable strategy in the direction of a goal which we had set for ourselves.

In the immediate wake of the launching of the Mission, National Literacy Mission Authority was constituted with two wings, namely, the Council and the Executive Committee, the former headed by the Minister of HRD and the latter by the Education Secretary. State Literacy Mission Authorities were also formed simultaneously and State Mission Directors were appointed. All the ongoing conventional programmes were given a critical look, reviewed and revised. A number of joint study teams went round different States and Union Territories, districts, blocks and villages to gauge the mood of the people, to spread the message of the Mission with clarity and conviction and to create a climate for a people's movement for literacy. Some of the significant developments which had taken place both before and after in the wake of the launching of the NLM could be chronicled in a historical perspective as follows:

- Launching of "Sampoorna Saksharata Abhiyan" by Gujarat Vidyapeeth on May 1, 1988.
- Launching of a campaign for total literacy for Coimbatore by Adviser, Technology Missions to the PM on May 11, 1988.
- Launching of mass campaigns for total literacy in 20 talukas at the rate of one taluka per district in Karnataka in a massive convention of VAs and NGOs at Nanjangoud (Mysore) on November 7, 1988.
- Initiative taken by Dr (Miss) Bengalee, Vice-Chancellor, Bombay University for a mass programme of functional literacy with the help of teachers and students of the Bombay University on August 15, 1988.
- Initiative taken by the Committee of Resource Organisations (CORO) for launching a mass campaign for total literacy with the help of student and non-student youth volunteers in the Dharavi-BARC belt on November 15, 1989.
- Literacy as a Movement of the People (LAMP), a convention organised by Dr B V Parameshwara Rao of Bhagavatula Charitable Trust, Yellamanchilli in Bangalore from July 1 to 3, 1989.

A lot of communication with the States, UTs, districts, etc. took place, a lot of solidarity, rapport and bonhomie was established but the government-funded and government-controlled programme did not become a people's movement. Despite the best possible intentions and efforts, literacy continued to be the stereotyped conventional Centre-based programme. Voluntarism and mass mobilisation remained a far cry. Outcome-oriented results, which are also measurable and deliverable within a prescribed time span, were elusive.

The first opportunity came in April 1989 when the efficacy of the campaign approach was demonstrated for the first time in Kottayam city of Kerala. It was also demonstrated that small is beautiful. The district and the city had the highest rate of literacy in the country (81 per cent and 97 per cent respectively). There were only 2000 persons in the 6-60 age-group to be made literate. The Collector and DM, Kottayam succeeded in mobilising 200 volunteers from the NSS unit of the Mahatma Gandhi University for forging a link with the 2000 potential learners to make them fully literate within a period of three months (April-June, 1989). The city was declared fully literate on June 25, 1989 and the story of this first great experiment in total literacy has been encapsuled in the shape of a book, *How We Did It in 100 days*, written by A.J. Alphonso, the Collector of Kottayam.

What started as a time-bound one-shot affair, though on a modest scale in Kottayam, soon grew into a massive movement, first in the district of Ernakulam, then in the entire Kerala State, Gujarat, Pondicherry and now in 106 projects involving 165 districts. The methodology which was adopted in Ernakulam and later in the whole of the Kerala State was unique in many respects, which need to be listed. These are:

- Massive approach—entire district taken in one go.
- Total coverage to the point of saturation—one member of the society, literate or illiterate, could escape from the impact of the campaign for total literacy.
- Transformation of literacy work from avenues of employment to a duty/obligation tinged with pride and patriotism.
- Meticulous spatial and temporal planning as in a war for mobilisation and deployment of human and material resources.
- Integration of people's enthusiasm with administrative machinery on the one hand and a professional project structure on the other.
- Delinking the implementing machinery from governmental bureaucracy to increase dynamism and flexibility and at the same time ensuring accountability by stringent monitoring by the people themselves.

The total literacy plan for Ernakulam was launched on January 26, 1989 with the following prophetic words:

> There are no prospects for a literate Kerala within an illiterate India Kerala has to play a leading role in making the whole of India literate. This is imperative for the progress of Kerala. Only by eradicating illiteracy from its own soil and sharing the experiences and excitement there from that Kerala can play this role.

(To be continued)

Chemical Weapons Convention Safeguards North's Interests

CHAKRAVARTHI RAGHAVAN

This article, written in mid-August, and sent from Geneva reached us late. However, it is bring published now in view of its abiding importance.

—Editor

If things go according to the plans of the Western countries and major industrial powers, the UN General Assembly at its forthcoming session beginning September will approve a draft convention on chemical weapons and it will be opened up for signature at Paris after the US elections.

Dates in December or early January are being contemplated.

The 39-nation Committee on Disarmament (CD) is set to wind up at the end of August the more than a decade-old negotiations on chemical weapons and forward to the UN General Assembly for its consideration and adoption the draft treaty: "Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction".

The Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons of the CD, Germany's Ambassador, Adolf Ritter von Wagner, is to present a new revised version of his earlier text and this will come up before the CD on August 26. But there will be no further negotiations.

The Convention is aimed at prohibiting the development, production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons and ensure destruction of the chemical weapons and production facilities within a ten-year period from date of entry into force.

Towards this end, it has provisions (and lists some of the chemicals usable as weapons in schedules) for their being declared and destroyed, prohibiting further development of such weapons, and provides for a multilateral regime and a secretariat to administer the convention and a verification regime, and ancillary matters including technology development and trade.

But the Convention will not end use of 'riot control agents' and herbicides against guerillas—the US used these extensively in the Vietnam War—and may even legitimise their use.

In drawing up the convention, the industrial nations have reconciled their own differences and tabled a text whose main thrust (of so-called verification and challenge verification) is and will be against the developing world—not merely in terms of ensuring no "poor man's nuclear bomb" comes up to threaten the West's security, but also to ensure that the South's chemical industries do not develop independently of the Transnational industry and become a future competitor.

The author is the Chief Editor of SUNS, South-North Development Monitor *and Editor of the* Third World Economics.

They hope to get the draft out of the CD by end of August, and take it to the General Assembly to get its imprimatur and cajole and pressure the few remaining Third World holdouts to join.

The negotiations were practically concluded on August 7, when the Ad Hoc Committee of the CD on chemical weapons completed its consideration of a draft text of a convention put forward by von Wagner, and some amendments to the text that he put forward on that day, taking into account a large number of amendments to his text proposed by a group of 14 developing countries and the comments on these from the other members, particularly leading industrial nations.

The group of developing countries comprised: Algeria, China, Cuba, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Mexico, Myanmar, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Zaire.

Some like India were concerned over the provisions on technology and trade and the continuance of parallel discriminatory regimes that would still deny them the technology and products.

Others like Pakistan or Iran or China may have been concerned over the distinct possibility that the verification processes could be used against them to pry into their other activities, including perhaps some clandestine nuclear weapons activities.

And others might have been concerned over the prospect of use of herbicides and tear gas in war or war-like operations.

The group, nevertheless, joined together and put forward amendments and negotiated jointly. But it seems unlikely that they will continue to stand together.

When the CD meets on August 26 to 'consider' the new revised draft text, it will be clear whether the text will go to the General Assembly as a consensus document or whether a few of the developing countries will block the consensus and force the Western nations to take it to the General Assembly as their own text (but with a wide cosponsorship). It will also be clear at that stage how many of the other developing countries will support the consensus or for the moment remain muted.

Several of them will be weighing the pros and cons in terms of regional political and security interests and tensions, their own domestic public opinion and interests of their chemical industries, the prospects of using their adhesion to the convention to get some technologies (which are now being denied to them under export controls for alleged security reasons), and being on the 'good books' of the major Western powers and the IMF and the World Bank in the New World Order.

Some of the other developing nations in the CD—notably Argentina, Brazil and Peru (in Latin America) and Nigeria and Morocco in Africa—have not joined the Group of 14. Though a few of them take some moralistic tones in justifying their support to the draft, the various situations that their governments face domestically, and needing US support on them, is weighing with these countries.

Chemical weapons are abnoxious and condemnatory and a proper convention to outlaw them would thus deserve support.

But, some of the provisions of the Convention could, in the long-term, have some adverse effects on the Third World.

Coupled with the like outcome of the Uruguay Round in the area of intellectual property rights, the convention could cast another shadow over indigenous industrialisation and developmment of technology in the South and give another push to the transnational sectors.

As some of the amendments of the Group of 14, and explanations given by them (during discussions) show, even the requirement that any "plant" producing annually more than 30 tonnes of "unscheduled (under the convention) discrete organic chemical containing the elements phosphorous, sulphur or fluorine" would have to keep extensive records and provide them. All such plants too could easily be the target of "verification".

In several of the large Third World countries like India, there are any number of very small-scale plants, either producing fertilisers and pesticides as final products and based on petro-chemical inputs, or as producing intermediates for final products by others; and all of them will be caught in this net. Any major TIC suspecting an enterprise of infringing its "patent" could easily manipulate a challenge verification to find out the situation and gain knowledge of its 'secrets'. Even though verification is technically in terms of the obligations of the convention even international inspectors are not above board, and quite often are intelligence agents too.

When concluded and (universally) accepted, the CW Convention will be a major precedent setting treaty on disarmament and multilateral verification, involving the reconciling of the international community's interests in verification and the issues of sovereignty of nations. It will also be "most expensive" of the disarmament treaties in terms of monitoring, verification and enforcement.

But whether it will ultimately be accepted by some of the key developing countries seems to be an open question.

Given the views expressed in Delhi by Eduardo Falciro, the Minister of State for External Affairs in a press briefing in Delhi (though subsequently explained away, at the instance of Indian officials in Geneva who were still negotiating on the text at that time and felt embarrassed), as also the views about pros and cons expressed by negotiators here, it appears to be reasonably certain that India will agree to the text and support it and sign it. The issue is reportedly before the Political Affairs Committee of the Cabinet.

Perhaps, some portions of the proposed convention—particularly provisions for verification and "challenge verification"—may be seen by India vis a vis Pakistan and China as beneficial and useful to its security interests. It may enable the US or one of its allies to mount some "challenge verifications" of plants allegedly in use for clandestinely developing or producing chemical weapons. The inspection demand could be on plants suspected to be part of the complex of nuclear weaons programme in Pakistan. Some part of any nuclear weapons programme, whether of plutonium separation or of uranium enrichment are "chemical" processes.

However, some of the provisions of the Convention as they stand could, in the long-term, have some adverse effects on India too.

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THE issue of chemical weapons and banning them has been on the international agenda since the mid-60s, though negotiations gathered some momentum only in the late seventies and early eighties.

Chemical weapons, in the more popular terminology of 'poison gas' has met with universal oprobrium. And despite considerable investments and experimentation by the military establishments of the major military powers, and their attempts to find uses for such weapons, they have been found to be not useful or usable in battle conditions—since use against the enemy cannot be done in ways that will guarantee no-adverse-use against one's own troops.

Like nuclear weapons, their possession and possible use can only serve the purpose of a terror weapon against adversaries and more as a threat rather than a real end use.

Much before the Second World War, in the aftermath of World War I and use of "poison gas" (mustard gas was used) in that war, the 1925 Geneva protocols banning use of "Asphyxiating, Poisonous or *other gases* (emphasis added), and of Bacteriological Methods of warfare" were signed.

In the light of subsequent claims (by the US) or attempts at justification (by its allies), the words 'other gases' in the Geneva protocol is noteworthy.

Despite subsequent technological changes between the two wars, and more so after the World War II when there was production and development of the so-called 'nerve gas' and 'binary' weapons (stretching the letter of the protocols), it was always understood that the spirit of the protocols banned such warfare and that this was "the law of civilised nation" and thus international law.

Subsequent evidence (much after World War II) has shown that Japan, which had used poison gas in its war in China during World War II, did contemplate and prepare for use of such weapons. If it did not, it was the difficulties of their use in conditions where its own troops would not be hurt. The Americans gained the 'secrets' of these technological developments during their military occupation of Japan, quickly took them away to the United States and used them to try and develop such weapons further.

But the first challenge to the law of civilised nations came in the 1960s and the international community was found wanting.

The United States, which had not acceded to these protocols, used the so-called "riot control agents"—a more virulent form of the normal tear gases used by police in domestic law enforcement -and "herbicides" in the Vietnam War.

Perhaps in other times such a use would have been justified on the basis that the international law did not apply outside Europe and North America—an argument used by the Portuguese to justify the piracy of Vasco de Gama in the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean or by the British when they waged their opium wars against China (for the right to sell opium) and burnt the summer palace in Beijing.

The US took varying positions in the 1960s. It first argued that it was not a party to the Geneva protocols and, when this produced protests that whether the US had signed it or not, the Geneva Conventions had become the accepted law of civilised nations in warfare, the US took the position that the existing conventions did not cover such substances (that tear gas was not 'poison gas', and herbicides was not 'gas') and that the US was ready to negotiate and sign a comprehensive one.

In the meanwhile it continued their use in Vietnam.

The European NATO allies of the US, who were signatories to the Geneva protocols and ought to have condemned, made noises but did not go beyond that. They were not fighting the Vietnam war, though they, as Japan too, benefited financially by supplying the US forces.

Nevertheless, there was a public outcry, and critical comments including from the then UN Secretary-General U Thant, who viewed his office as the "conscience of mankind" and repeatedly spoke out against the Vietnam war and its horrors.

The anti-Vietnam War movement inside the United States also raised an outcry.

All this forced the US to slightly back off and international disarmament negotiations began to focus on chemical and biological weapons—with the US claiming that the protocol against "bacteriological weapons" did not cover the new types of 'biological weapons'.

The US dragged its feet in the negotiations raising some impossible conditions; on one or two occasions, when the Soviets seemed about ready to accept it, the US changed its position and resiled from its own proposals.

Nevertheless, pressure of world public opinion resulted in the Convention on "Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxic weapons and on their Destruction" being concluded and signed in 1972.

Despite it, as late as the seventies even after the 1972 Convention, the US conducted some clandestine research activities in field testing of biological agents and their delivery 'systems'.[1]

The Convention though still left a vast gap in the area of the chemical weapons which by then had become very sophisticated. In the Iraq-Iran Gulf war, there were charges, some of them found to be correct, of the use of chemical weapons by Iraq against Iran. But the US and others who were supporting Iraq in that war, made protests and noises but allowed it to go on.

Intense efforts to ban the chemical weapons however ran into two problems: one the issue of inspection and verification, not only of chemical weapons production plants but of the advanced chemical industry—since for those who had mastery over the technology conversion of dual use chemicals to weapons was easy.

The negotiations also ran into the snag of the US insistence on what used to be described as the "two per cent option", which would have enabled it to develop some weapons and keep a residuary arsenal for use or threat of use in some contingencies.

The collapse of the Soviet power and the more recent Gulf war over the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait (during which there was much fear on the side of the US allies that their ground troops could face Iraqi chemical weapons) gave a push for international efforts to ban such weapons. The US too joined though reluctantly.

In the New World Order, where doctrines for use of nuclear weapons and threat of use in the Third World are being developed, chemical weapons were seen as the "poor man's nuclear bomb" to be banned and guarded against.

Intense negotiations followed on the gut issues of definitions, what should be banned and what would be permitted, the question of verification, etc. All these were carried on through the CD's Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons.

These negotiations focused on the interests of the major powers with vast chemical industries. The Group of developing countries also put forward their concerns, but these appear to have been largely ignored.

As soon as the major powers, particularly the US, Western Europe and Japan were able to resolve their differences, the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee tabled the text, suggesting in his explanatory note that its provisions, including some pharaseology supplied by them, represented "large amount of consensus".

The scheme of the Conventionhas articles setting out the general obligations, "never under any circumstances": to develop, produce, otherwise acquire, stockpile or retain chemical weapons, or transfer, directly or indirectly chemical weapons to anyone; to use chemical weapons; to engage in any military preparations to use chemical weapons; to assist, encourage or induce anyone to engage in any activity prohibited by the Convention.

Each state party is obliged to destroy all chemical weapons it possesses, or abandoned in territory of another state, and destroy all chemical weapons production facilities.

There is an elaborate definition of various expressions used.

There are requirements for declaration, within 30 days of entry into force, of whether a state possess chemical weapons, production facilities; on transfers of such weapons made since January 1, 1946; and provide a general plan for destruction. Declaration with full information and detail are also to be provided for old or abandoned chemical weapons on its territory or whether any has been abandoned by it in other's territory, and about chemical weapon production facilities it has and a general plan for its destruction.

Chemical weapons and weapons production facilities are to be eliminated and destroyed over a ten year period, according to a phased programme. Full access is to be provided for verification and monitoring of all existing weapons and facilities for production.

Another article sets out activities not prohibited under the Convention.

Other provisions include those for establishment of an Organisation for Prohibition of Chemical Weapons with a Technical Secretariat headed by a Director-General, with teams of technically qualified inspectors, for a Conference of Parties and a 41-member Executive Council with some balanced regional representation and for including within each region a specified number of countries with "the most significant national chemical industry in the region". From Asia there are nine states on the Council, four of them in the "most significant" category. India would thus be assured of a seat on the Council.

There are provisions for consulation, cooperation and fact-finding, provisions for inspections and "challenge inspections", with elaborate procedures for these set out in an Annex; for settlement of disputes; and another Annex with schedules of chemicals and guidelines for including chemicals in particular schedules.

The Convention when it is signed and enters into force (and it will when 65 nations sign and ratify it), is supposed to ban the development, production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons and provide for the elimination of all existing stocks of weapons over a 10-year period.

Despite any claims that might be made, through oral declarations or interpretative statements, the use of so-called "riot control agents" beyond one's borders for "law enforcement" or the use of herbicides as a weapon will not be banned by the Convention.

"Riot control agents" have been defined as any chemical not listed in a schedule to the Convention "which can produce rapidly human sensory irritation or disabling physical effects which disappear within a short time following termination of exposure".

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THE general obligation contains a provision by which each state party undertakes "not to use riot control agents as a method of warfare". The definition clause, under purposes not prohibited under this Convention, stipulates in Art II:9 (d) "Law enforcement including domestic riot control purposes".

The formulation in an earlier version of the draft "Domestic law enforcement including riot control purposes" was changed into its present language, at the insistence of the United States, and would mean not only domestic, but non-domestic or foreign.

The United States used some virulent forms of "tear gas" during the Vietnam War, with some long-term serious effects on those exposed.

The "tear gas" was not used to control or disperse demonstrators (peaceful or violent) against civilian authority, but to 'flush out' guerillas from their secret, underground hideouts, who had survived the US carpet bombing of remote jungle areas.

In international law the US never "declared a state of war" in Vietnam, but characterised it as military operations to assist the US-recognised legal government in Saigon which was sought to be overthrown by guerillas aided by the North.

Nevertheless, it was a "war" and the use of "tear gas" was a violation of the 1925 Geneva protocols against use of "asphyxiating, poisonous or other gases" which the US was bound to observe as the law of civilised nations —since the protocol had been accepted by all the nations of the world (except the US), even if the US non-signature meant no legal obligation.

But if the draft convention had been in force then, the US use of the "tear gas" would have been "legitimate"—a measure of "law enforcement including domestic riot control" permitted by the Convention.

The Convention will legitimise such use in the future, and "riot control agents" would be used in future "peace-keeping" operations of the US-manipulated UN Security Council which increasingly will be intervening in the Third World countries for "humanitarian" purposes.

And explanations and comments of some CD negotiators, including from the Third World, leave little doubt that such a use in a UN authorised operation is envisaged.

Only those who have never been exposed to the 'riot control agents'—can glibly talk of their 'non-lethal' character. Any serious side-effects could always be attributed to other reasons, particularly when it involves browns and blacks. Perhaps in a future international "law enforcement action" in the Third World CNN or other TV programmes could even speak of their laser-guided precision delivery and "humane use", just as they went lyrical over the 'smart bombs' over Iraq.

The US used herbicides extensively in the Vietnam war, causing serious ecological damage to the forests and vegetation in the entire Indo-China peninsula. It has been using herbicides in its so-called war against drugs in some Latin American countries to destroy crops in areas suspected to be used by peasants to grow cocoa. These remote jungle regions and areas, coincidentally, are also the strongholds of some of the guerilla movements, like the Shining Path in Peru.

The use of herbicides as a weapon of war is not specifically prohibited under the Convention.

The US was stoutly opposed to any language that would clearly outlaw the use of herbicides like other chemical weapons as a method of warfare, or limit the use of 'riot control agents' to strictly "domestic law enforcement and riot control purposes" (as one of the amendments of the Group of 14 suggested).

The US view prevailed, and critics are to be fobbed off by the Preamble. This is a transparent figleaf that does not hide the nakedness of the international community and its surrender to the US.

The Preamble to the Convention says: "Recognising the prohibition, embodied in the pertinent agreements and relevant principles of international law, of the use of herbicides as a method of warfare."

It is not insignificant that while other parts of the Preamble, in citing other international agreements, specifies them, on herbicides it is left vague.

The German Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee has sought to underline in his explanatory memorandum that under the Vienna Law of Treaties, a preamble is an integral part of the treaty, leading the unwary perhaps to think that use of hebicides as a method of warfare is banned. But it is not. A preamble is of use in interpreting some ambiguously worded provision or when introducing amendments at a future date to show it is within the objective. But a preamble does not create a specific obligation and, given the history of the Convention and amendments proposed to include herbicides specifically, but not accepted, the conclusion is clear.

In the beginning, the industrial nations tried to ridicule and reject the viewpoints of the developing countries and their proposed amendments, with the British delegate in one private meeting, for example, reportedly describing one of the proposals (for change) presented and explained by Pakistan (on behalf of the 14) as "stupid". When such undiplomatic language was protested by Nigeria, the British delegate defended himself by saying it was "under instructions".

There were also attempts at dividing the group as when Western diplomats asked some of the Asians and Africans what they thought of the growing relations between India and China.

But soon the ICs discovered that these tactics would not pay and they were forced to discuss the amendments of the 14 in detail in the Ad Hoc Committee and at least go through the motions of negotiations. And on August 6, some of the amendments, in a modified form, were accepted and presented as the Chairman's amendments. These were mostly minor, but did contain some improvement on the issue of technology cooperation and trade, though ultimately it may prove to be less than what it says.

One of the major concerns of India and some others was the provision in the draft in Article XI dealing with "Economic and Technological Development".

Article XI of the von Wagner's original draft, provides:

> 1. The provisions of the Convention shall be implemented in a manner which avoids hampering the economic or technological development of states and international cooperation in the field of chemical activities for purposes not prohibited by the Convention including the international exchange of scientific and technical information and chemicals and equipment for the production, processing or use of chemicals for purposes not prohibited under this Convention.
> 2. Subject to the provisions of this Convention and without prejudice to the principles and applicable rules of international law, states parties shall:
>   (a) Have the right, individually or collectively, to conduct research with, to develop, produce, acquire, retain, transfer and use chemicals;
>   (b) undertake to facilitate, and have the right to participate in, the fullest possible exchange of chemicals, equipment and scientific and technological information relating to the development and application of chemistry for purposes not prohibited under this Convention;
>   (c) not maintain among themselves any restrictions, including those in any international agreements, inconsistent with the objects and purpose of this Convention, which would restrict or impede trade and the development and promotion of scientific and technological knowledge in the field of chemistry for industries, agricultural, research, medical, pharmaceutical or other peaceful purposes;
>   (d) not use this Convention as grounds for applying any measures other than those provided for, or permitted, under this Convention nor use any other international agreement for pursuing an objective inconsistent with the objects and purposes of this Convention;
>   (d) undertake to review its existing national regulations in the field of trade in chemicals in order to render them consistent with the object and purpose of this convention.

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IN their reactions and amendments to this draft, the Group of 14 found the use of "avoids" in Article XI:1 not sufficient and wanted language to the effect that the Convention's provisions "shall" be implemented in a manner that "does not hamper" economic and technological development or international cooperation.

Another amendment of theirs sought deletion of the words "inconsistent with the object and purposes of the convention" in XI:2 (C), and instead adding at the end (after 'peaceful purposes') the words "not prohibited under this Convention".

And finally, in respect of XI: 2(e), in the provision requiring review of national legislations, they wanted states to undertake to review "their" (instead of 'its') existing national regulations.

This last could indirectly cast an obligation on the Australia Group or the EC to review their collective harmonised decisions and the national regulations flowing from them.

Behind the amendments was the demand of the 14 that, once the Convention comes into force and countries become parties, the Australia Group and its parallel regime be disbanded in relation to parties to the Convention.

The Australia group members coordinate and harmonize thier exports to the Third World and decide what products and technologies could be made available. Ostensibly, a regime to prevent proliferation of chemical weapons, by its very nature it is a discriminatory regime that has enabled the North to maintain its dominance in this industrial sector and ensure that no new competition arises in the South.

In an attempt to meet this, in a statement on August 6 at the meeting of CD, Australian Disarmament Ambassador Paul O'Sullivan formally identified the Group's members as Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, the UK and the USA.

In a statement on their behalf, O'Sullivan said:

> They (member-states of the group) undertake to review, in the light of the implementation of the Convention, the measures that they take to prevent the spread of chemical substances and equipment for purposes contrary to the objectives of the Convention, with the aim of removing

> such measures for the benefit of states parties to the Convention acting in full compliance with their obligations under the Convention. They intend thus to contribute actively to an increase in commercial and technological exchanges between states and to the universal and full implementation of the Convention on the prohibition of chemical weapons.

The Indian delegate, Ambassador Prakash Shah, in an intervention, said that it was "heartening" that the Australia group for the first time had indicated its willingness to consider removing these measures.

> Even though there are some conditions attached to it, we consider this as indicative of acceptance of our concerns and it goes some way in addressing this problem... However, it is our belief that the intention behind this statement should be adequately reflected in the language of Article XI, as and when negotiations based on WP/Rev 1 (the Chairman draft) are concluded.

The next day, the Chairman put forward some amendments to Article XI.

In XI:2 (C), the new text proposed the replacement of the words "inconsistent with the objects and purposes of this Convention" with the words "incompatible with the obligations undertaken under this Convention". This is perhaps marginally an improvement, but weaker than the G-14 amendment " not prohibited under the Convention". What is "prohibited" has to be found from the texts of the Convention while "incompatible with obligations" is a matter of opinion and argumentation.

But the changes proposed do not really address the substance of the concerns, namely, that once the Convention comes into force, it should be illegal and illegitimate for governments of groups of countries acting together as in the 'Australia Group' to maintain discriminatory export restrictions and deny in a discriminatory and unilateral way technology and chemical products to others (mostly developing countries).

Assurances of Australia that the group would undertake to review, in the light of the implementation of the Convention, the measures that they take to prevent the spread of chemical substances and equipment for purposes contrary to the objectives of the Convention, with the aim of removing such measures for the benefit of states parties to the Convention acting in full compliance with their obligations under the Convention is full of conditions and ifs and buts. The shadow regime outside the Convention will remain for quite some time, and will be used to block the rise of competition—given the dual use to which most processes and products could be put to.

Under the Convention, elimination of chemical weapons should begin no later than two years after entry into force and should be completed no later than ten years. An annex provides for elimination of one per cent of weapons no later than three years of entry into force, 20 per cent no later than five years and 45 per cent no later than seven years, and all weapons no later than 10 years.

Put another way, those who have chemical weapons, will retain 55 per cent—and it is reasonably clear they will be the most deadly—for seven years after entry into force, and then will destroy them in a three-year period.

The Group of 14 had sought an accelerated schedule with each party eliminating five per cent of its Class I chemical weapons in the first three years of entry into force, 30 per cent within five years of entry into force and 60 per cent within seven years.

But the US and others did not agree. They have large arsenals and know that elimination will be a very costly process—and militaries do not like to give up any weapon so easily. Their view prevailed.

Any state unable to complete the destruction during an intermediate stage, has to seek and obtain the authorisation for extension from the Conference of Parties. All the costs of destruction and verification in this event will be borne fully by the party concerned.

The Convention also enables, though described as exceptional circumstances, the conversion of a chemical weapons plant to other uses not prohibited. The 14 sought to hedge in these provisions by requiring the consent of the Conference of Parties, and the plant converted or being converted brought under verification for full ten years after the conversion is certified (by the Director-General, the chief executive of the CW Convention regime).

A role for the Conference of Parties has been conceded in the final version.

The Convention has some extensive provisions for verification of compliance with its provisions by Parties, including some very detailed verification procedures set out in an Annex.

Among others it enables each state party to request a "challenge inspection" of any facility or locality in the territory or any other place under the jurisdiction or control of any other state party for the sole purpose of clarifying or resolving any questions concerning the possible non-compliance with the provisions of the Convention and have the inspection conducted without delay. The inspection is virtually automatic.

The inspection by the inspectors of the organisation can take place, with just 13 hours notice to the state concerned "prior to the planned arrival of the inspection team at the point of entry". The Executive Council of the Convention of Parties "may" by a three-fourths majority of its membership decide against the challenge inspection, but given the composition, the industrial powers will have a blocking fourth to prevent any challenge being blocked by the Council.

The Council will have 41 members-nine from Africa, nine from Asia, five from Eastern Europe, seven from Latin America, ten from West European and other states, and one seat to rotate amongst Africa, Asia and Latin America. While all members are to be elected for two-year terms, three from Africa, four from Asia, one from Eastern Europe and five from West Europe and others are to be countries with significant national chemical industries.

The costs of the organisation and verification are likely to be considerable, and some estimates say it could be as high as that of the International Atomic Energy Agency. It is to be apportioned according to the UN scale. The costs of destruction and elimination of weapons and weapons production facilities are to be borne by the parties. In the case of old and abandoned weapons in the territories of other parties, the states that abandoned them will have to bear the costs of their destruction. ■

FOOTNOTE

1. 'Foreign Participation or Collaboration in Research Projects in India'. 167th Report of the Public Accounts Committee, 1975-1976, Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi (PAC No. 497).

Primitive Accumulation and Kleptocratic Rule

GRIGORI KOTOVSKY

It is perhaps not so surprising that both the Western and the Soviet media have been concentrating on the tactics of individuals in their attempt to grapple with and make sense of the accelerating sequence of events leading to the collapse of the Soviet Union. After all, the General Secretary of the CPSU has always been an unconstitutional monarch and Gorbachev was no exception. But instead of concentrating on the role of political leaders alone in the dissolution of the USSR, I wish in this article to examine the class forces behind these events.

Perestroika can then be seen as the natural historical outcome of a general social, economic and political crisis which had already become evident by the mid-sixties. The transition to a new economic system based on markets, to political and ideological plurality, the restoration of human rights and the development of civil society based on parliamentary democracy were all unavoidable compulsions for the then Soviet society. And no one will contest the historical role of Gorbachev and his close followers who grasped the necessity for changes and who set *perestroika* in motion. The means by which these transformations are being achieved, however, leaves no room to doubt that their principal objective has been to safeguard the interests of the Soviet ruling class.

It has to be recognised that, despite its egalitarian ideology, Soviet communism had long allowed the development of class society. What was the nature of the class which controlled both political power and the means of production in the public sector? This class consisted of the upper structures of the Communist Party, the military, the civil service and went down to embrace directors of productive industrial enterprises and chairmen of collective and state farms. *Perestroika* was initiated by this very class, in its own interest, and not by a constituency from below.

It is well known that *perestroika* started with basic changes in Soviet foreign policy. The foreign policy of the USSR was forced to change for two kinds of reasons. First, the economy could no longer support the cost of nuclear defences and the arms race. Second, and related to the first, the Soviet society as a whole had lost faith in the legitimacy of this race. As a result there emerged a consensus among the ruling class about the new trends in foreign policy.

The author, a Professor of the Russian Academy of Sciences, is a noted Indologist and was the head the Indian section of the Institute of Oriental Studies Moscow.

To secure the support of the major part of the Soviet establishment, Gorbachev initiated at the early stage of *perestroika* a substantial increase in the salaries of the higher echelons of the administration, or party *apparatchiks* and the trade union elite. These were unambiguous signals that the reforms were in their basic interest. But the rapid shift to political and ideological pluralism resulted, *inter alia,* in mounting an open criticism of the party, its ideology and past performance. The decisive success of opposition forces under open anti-Communist banners in the Baltic Republics combined with substantial challenges elsewhere and added to uncertainties for the administration and the party apparatus to bring about a series of unforeseen splits in the ruling class.

At the early stage of *perestroika* (about 1985-88), the Soviet establishment, seeking to consolidate its power, split into two groups. On the one hand was a conservative group desiring reforms with safeguards that the basic economic and social structures of Soviet society would remain intact. Secondly, there was Gorbachev's entourage who stood for pluralistic democracy, decentralisation of power and decision-making and markets.

By the end of 1988, when it had become obvious that no political and economic structures would escape change, two further types of split occurred. On the one hand the old Soviet ruling class, both in Russia and in the republics inside and outside Russia, with neither the imagination nor the material interest to envisage or push through alternatives to old Communist structures, fomented and battened on to extreme nationalism, ethnic nationalism and sectarianism as a means of saving their skins. Look at the Baltic States, Armenia, Georgia, Moldavia and even the Ukraine, They are now being ruled not so much by anti-Communists as by opportunistic former Communists, with a new political base.

On the other hand, a new 'entrepreneurial' class has emerged from the nomenclature and united in a shotgun marriage with commercial speculative elements of society. As the mismatch between supplies and effective demand had intensified, the public sector itself had successfully nurtured a powerful mafia, if not a class, of blackmarketeers, hoarders and speculators.

This pseudo middle class is rapidly enriching itself in three main ways. One is through the so-called cooperatives. Early reforms encouraged cooperatives in both production and circulation in order, on the face of it, to increase competition with the public sector in the interests of general efficiency. The results could not have been more different. By about October 1991 there were over 2500 cooperatives. Only 20 per cent were in production. The rest are in pure commerce: I must emphasise, in buy and sell operations. Furthermore, these coops are actually small joint stock enterprises. And who accumulated the capital to invest this way and to accumulate further at unprecedented rates? These people are mainly ex-high party officials, top level administrators, underground speculators and even real criminals. Many production and service cooperatives have been set up as extensions of factories and institutes of applied technology. They are selling exactly the same goods and services as are produced by their parent organisations, but at exorbitant prices!

The second means of enrichment is via the import-export sector. Since 1987 exports have been entirely liberalised. Whereas before 1987 foreign trade was in the charge of a state monopoly and factory and farm managers had no direct links with overseas markets, since that date any unit of production can sell its goods abroad. And does. Following the example of these large trading companies, tens of thousands of individual, small scale traders are speculating in import-export operations. Their consumer goods ride out on the backs of wholesale trading organisations and are sold abroad at lower than average prices. In return, goods of Petticoat Lane standards are brought to Moscow and other big cities and sold at sky high prices in small boutiques.

The third route to *nouveau richesse* is through joint enterprises with foreign capital. By the end of 1991 about 80 per cent of these were in commerce, not in production.

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ALL these new forms of 'entrepreneurship' are real steps towards the market economy. What was their impact on the economy? Over the last three years, we have watched a steady decline in flows of goods and services between domestic enterprises, a growing famine of raw materials, components and parts, and a steadily growing scarcity of a wide spectrum of consumer goods and foodstuffs.

Why is there currently such awful economic chaos? The breaking of the state monopoly in foreign trade has at least three main consequences. First, it has not only reduced the state to bankruptcy, forcing it to crawl on all fours to the G-7 countries for aid, it has also led to a massive decentralisation of foreign exchange holdings into the very linings of the pockets of directors of enterprises and ministry officials (especially those with power over licences). Instead of being concentrated and used in some kind of a planned way in either the public sector or the emerging private one for purposes of investment, hard currency is now privatised, scattered to the four winds and used for consumption or hoarded abroad.

Second, literally thousands of enterprises now export instead of delivering produce to their old partners inside the country. The consequences? The old linkages between enterprises within the domestic economy have been destroyed and Soviet society has been deprived not only of foreign exchange but also of consumer goods.

Third, unregulated exports led to the disappearance from the shops of goods in which the country was previously self-sufficient. One example is of TV sets (the production of which has been on a slow but steady expansion path). On the domestic market TV sets are now to all intents and purposes unavailable. They are all destined for foreign climes, South East Asia for instance, where they are being sold at discount prices. Another more serious deficit has been in bottles for wine and mineral water in Moscow and elsewhere. It was recently discovered that a group of young 'new entrepreneurs' had cornered the market, broken these bottles and exported glass to the West as a raw material! Even some essential foodstuffs are being exported!

A further body blow to production has taken the form of the rapidly expanding sector of commodity markets (*burses*), currently far surpassing their parent organisations in terms of numbers. These have replaced the state wholesale and distributive organisations (*gossnab*). The state enterprises, deprived of commercial information, have to use these firms as intermediaries and are robbed by them both as buyers and sellers. Commercial managers and brokers are making millions from thin air. The President of the most important commodity exchange in the Russian Federation, ex-Marxist economist, Borovoy, is heading the list of new Soviet multimillionaires, who have made their fortunes in the last two or three years. These commercial empires have been signal contributors to our inflation.

In short, the main cause of the deepening scarcity of consumer goods and of the decay of Soviet industry, is to be found in the economic processes initiated and supported by the state. Its objective can be nothing other than the formation of a new comprador bourgeoisie by means of this accelerated process of primary accumulation of capital. The picture is completed with the rupture of economic relations with eastern Europe, the shutting of basic chemicals industries under pressure from 'greens' and the disruptive fall-out of the miners' strikes...

Neither the Gorbachev-Ryzhkov-Pavlov combine nor Yeltsin's political group has ever tried to regulate or check these processes, though they appear to be ruinous to the economy in transition. On the contrary, public scandals involving in 1989-90 the so-called ANT state cooperative which exported 1990-91 'the affair of the 140 billion roubles', an import-export operation in which a member of the Russian Government, Felshin, was implicated, both reveal direct connections between top Soviet politicians and these import-export concerns. Both judicial cases were shelved!

Neither the official representatives nor the ideologues of political groups holding power have been able to present convincing analyses of economic development after about 1985. Their explanations for the economic chaos have the virtue of simplicity: 'results of the past Communist regime', 'the inevitable phase of transition', 'the result of inaction by the Centre' (this from the

Yeltsin group). To the extent that such explanations have been taken seriously at home and abroad, they have merely succeeded in exploiting a widespread credulity.

Of one thing we can be sure. We will now see the fractured elite competing for survival with different stategies of primitive accumulation, often basted in honeyed language welcome to audiences abroad. Meanwhile the mass of people is growing aware of the tragedy of *perestroika*, namely, that the reforms they originally supported (because of the obvious appeal and legitimacy of the declared goals of the reformers: *glasnost*, human rights, parliamentary democracy, improvements in consumption) are being constrained and limited by the original proponents of reform: by the ruling class itself.

The *coup d'etat* of August 1991 struck Soviet intellectuals as suspiciously idiotic. It smacked of theatre. After all the putchists had formidable means of oppression in their hands. Yet they were unable to overcome a Russian resistance that was far better publicised than it was organised. Whoever or whatever was behind this coup, it has had the effect of consolidating the fighting factions of the ruling class.

The economic base of this consolidation is the prospective privatisation of public property by the Yeltsin Government. Such plans open up enormous possibilities to grab public resources both for private sector *nouveaux riches* and for top bureaucrats including directors of enterprises. Already we hear of cases of so-called 'wild privatisation'. The nationalisation and redistribution of CPSU properties has also shown how the law can be violated on a mass scale. At the All-Russia conference of directors of public enterprises and private entrepreneurs, held in Moscow in January 1992, a demand was advanced to issue free of cost five per cent of shares of privatised public units to their directors. The tendency is obvious.

Yeltsin came to power overwhelmingly on a negative vote, a vote against the CPSU. What kind of economy and society was to replace the old one was shrouded in question marks. Only after his election did he clarify that he would go for a full-fledged market economy of the Western type. For this a bourgeoisie has to be created, or, as Yakovlev and other formerly Marxist-Leninist dogmatists have coyly euphemised, a 'middle class'. However, this 'middle class' is already creating itself at the speed of light. Semi-criminal and criminal elements and erstwhile high party members and foreign investors are being aided and abetted by a plethora of legal acts facilitating privatisation. A struggle will intensify between these people on the one hand and those on the other who favour the creation of markets but the reform of enterprise ownership by means of distribution of shares among those who work in them.

The watershed between Gorbachev and Yeltsin turns essentially on concepts of nationhood, between those who desire confederation and those who want the full disintegration of the USSR. We should be careful to note that the interests served by disintegration, ironically, are those of semi-Communist Russian chauvinism. For it is by means of full disintegration rather than by confederation that Russia will best be able to dominate other republics. The republics meanwhile are trapped between the interests of their own elites, often former Communist Party careerists exploiting subnationalisms, and Yeltsin's elite which expands its control over the levers of so much of the economic space on which the republics have been developed to depend. For the time being the army is loyal to Yeltsin, though splits are starting to become evident.

The socio-political situation in the CIS in the post-*perestroika* (since August 1991) grows increasingly complex. Three political camps have now emerged inside the Russian Federation: (i) conservatives, led by ex-party *apparatchiks* and bureaucrats marginalised in the process of enrichment. Though these people have no mass support, they are numerically strong and rather active in the republics and at local levels; (ii) political forces supporting the Yeltsin group, which directly represent the interests of both the *nouveaux riches* and a substantial segment of the old dominant class ready and waiting to transform itself into a new comprador bourgeoisie; (iii) the new Left, led by intellectuals, trade unionists and to some extent junior members of the ex-CPSU apparatus. In my view this latter group represents the interests of the majority of the population. It supports the transition to a market economy, but one mainly based on decentralised and collective forms of ownership of the means of production, restricting private property to services and retail trades. This group stands for a reinstallation of some kind of federal structure in the CIS.

It is not surprising that the West has rendered full support to Yeltsin's political group. The massive deliveries of food to save Gaidar's economic reforms speak for themselves. But we need to take note of three factors. First, it is doubtful that the Soviet *nonveaux riches* have material interests in economic stability. Quite the reverse. Russian plans to create markets for land and for immovable property will attract accumulated capital into non-productive investments. In the current conditions, markets in the CIS will be attractive to foreign investors only provided the rouble becomes fully convertible. But this demands a speedy reversal of current economic trends and the sustained growth of the GNP. Second, any further disintegration of the ex-Soviet Union will create collossal obstacles to economic recovery in the CIS states. The choice is clear: either accept President Nazarbayev's recent model of a CIS along the lines of the European Community or accept the full economic disintegration of the Asian Republics from Russia and their reintegration in a Middle Eastern economic organisation—a 'Caspian Common Market' and so on. Third, large masses of our population, attracted by Western levels of living, support plans for transition to some kind of capitalism, sold to them as a 'market economy'. But most have naively believed that such a transition could be implemented without mass impoverishment and unemployment, while safeguarding all the achievements of socialism in the social and cultural spheres. They were not braced for massive inequality of incomes between a small elite and the majority of the workforce. Now citizens of the CIS, especially of

Russia, are absorbed in the struggle for day to day survival. And this includes the major part of the intelligentsia. For the time being they have lost a sense of national self-dignity. But tomorrow they will discover that their ex-great power has been converted, with Western connivance, into a second rate country of the so-called Third World. There will be no chance of recovery as the 'brain drain' (which has already nearly destroyed Soviet fundamental science) will be joined by a 'brawn drain' (if plans for the selective outmigration of skilled man-power actually materialise). Their beloved armed forces are being converted into the police force guarding the interests of the North in the inevitable confrontation with the South in the twentyfirst century. They will become fiercely anti-Western. And a new nationalist upsurge on such a basis will not be propitious for global stability.

Tragically and ironically, it will be the West which will soon have to choose between the 'wild capitalism' of the so called Russian democrats, and the 'contained managerial capitalism' of the new Left. ■

ANAND SHARMA: South African Crisis

(Continued from page 8)

ANC leadership, sandwiched between an intransigent regime and militant supporters frustrated by laborious negotiations, went in for a Rolling Mass Action. The objective of this mass action was to accelerate the pace of change and force the government to make room for a representative Interim Government.

The mass action from August 3 to 6 received overwhelming response and paralysed the country. It culminated in an unprecedented rally at Pretoria led by Nelson Mandela and unequivocally demonstrated his emotional appeal. The peaceful conduct of the mass action is creditable and has proved false the earlier accusations linking the current violence to ANC's call for mass action.

The mass action has provided the much needed momentum to the democratic forces. For the ANC it has been an organisational success and has narrowed the gap between the leadership and restive grassroot activists.

Conflicting signals have since emerged and the situation continues to be fluid. Initially the mass action lifted hopes of an early resumption of negotiations. This impression was reinforced by both the sides with de Klerk stating that process towards installation of an Interim Government will be speeded up and Nelson Mandela listing three demands as against the 14 contained in the ANC memorandum. However, the ANC demands, that is, installation of Interim Government, practical steps to curb violence, and early elections to Constituent Assembly embody its earlier conditions.

The government has again made a characteristic U-turn. Its actions and utterances have widened the schism. The UN called for the release of political prisoners to which Pretoria had earlier agreed but failed to implement. The government has now responded with a clever proposal for general amnesty linking with it the release of detainees. This would guarantee pardon for all guilty security and police officials indicted for their connivance in violence. Expectedly, the ANC has rejected the Amnesty Plan. In order to pressurise or lure the ANC towards unconditional negotiations, the government first announced talks with the PAC—which had earlier rejected the CODESA and has now threatened to go ahead with negotiations with the CODESA parties without the ANC. It needs no emphasis that any such move will be farcical and suicidal. de Klerk appears more keen to outsmart and upstage the ANC than to resume negotiations. The strategy of the government is to exhaust and frustrate the ANC without conceding its demands. It has to realise that the ANC cannot possibly return to the negotiations without acceptance of its now basic conditions.

The possibility of a forward movement still remains as a conciliatory element is present in response to both the government and the ANC. The prospects have brightened with the meeting between the Constitutional Affairs Minister, Raelf Meyers, and the ANC Secretary-General Cyril Ramaphosa. It is, however, difficult to speculate about the outcome.

It is clear that when the negotiations resume, the mechanism will have to be different from the CODESA to include both extremes of the political spectrum, that is, the PAC/AZAPO and the Conservative Party.

The international community, which has reacted to the killings of innocent and defenceless people with shock and horror, has a critical role to play. The sharp worldwide reaction to the peaceful developments in South Africa has definitely rattled the Pretoria regime smug over its increasing recognition. President de Klerk is conscious of past isolation and is keen to avoid repetition of the same.

The mood of the government is not to defy the world opinion but to placate it so as to salvage the process of economic recovery. This consideration has made the government embark on a major public relation exercise. This is evident from its decision to allow the UN observers to monitor violence in the townships. The special session of the UN Security Council and the mission of Cyrus Vance has made some impact. The mindset of the government allows room for efforts by the world body to mount persuasive pressure for early resumption of talks. The situation demands sustained and renewed efforts. This is an acid test for the UN to extricate South Africa from mayhem and anarchy.

There is no room for delay and no alternative to a negotiated settlement. Time is running out for moderates in both the camps. All efforts have to be focussed to put the transition process back on track and to ensure its movement in only one direction—towards a non-racial and democratic South Africa. The road ahead is difficult and strewn with potential minefields. The international community has a historic responsibility at this critical juncture. It must remain alert to prevent South Africa from going over the precipice. ■

Architect of Friendship Movement

SUBRATA BANERJEE

Mahatma Gandhi had defined politics as service to the people. In this sense it is possible to be in politics without being a politician. An honest and good professional who serves the people can also be considered a good political activist. The distinction between a professional politician and a political being in the service of the people might appear to be thin, but is nevertheless very real. Dr A.V. Baliga was the embodiment of this distinction, as Dr Ravi M. Bakaya brings out so well in his biography of this great surgeon and patriot.

Dr Baliga was one of the most eminent surgeons of his time, with an international reputation. This did not stand in the way of his participation in the national movement for freedom and actively supporting many popular causes which had wider social, cultural and even political implications. Among these the most important were his active leadership of the Indo-Soviet friendship movement and close association with the print media, particularly, *Link*, *Patriot* and the *Free Press Journal*.

A.V. Baliga: Surgeon and Patriot by Ravi M. Bakaya; Patriot Publishers; New Delhi, 1991; pp. 183, Price: Rs. 45

Dr Bakaya is well-equipped to author the biography of Dr Baliga He was one of the pioneers of the Indo-Soviet friendship movement in this country and later a close associate of his hero. He traces the roots of the combination of surgeon and patriot in Dr Baliga to the cosmopolitan cultural and religious environment of his childhood; his participation in the non-cooperation movement; and to his early days of struggle in preparing for his profession.

It was his experiences that moulded his attitude towards life and his world view. His active association with the socialists during the 'Quit India' movement and with the Communists later on, as the founder President of the Indo-Soviet Cultural Society (ISCUS), contributed to his socialist convictions, without being dogmatic. No wonder he did not join any political party. Dr Bakaya's story of Dr Baliga's life brings out these aspects very clearly and at times even pointedly.

As a surgeon Dr Baliga rose to the peak of his profession and was deeply respected by his colleagues, both for his masterly diagnosis and his constant concern about their welfare. He was popular as a teacher. His patients included the tallest among his countrymen and he commanded the highest fees. Yet he treated every patient equally. He could have become a surgeon accessible only to the rich. He could have chosen a successful political career, like a few others in the medical profession, spurred by his deep political convictions. He chose to serve his people instead through his profession and active participation in selected political and other activities that served the interest of his people and his country. Dr Bakaya ably traces this aspect.

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A little less than half the book is devoted to the Indo-Soviet friendship movement and specifically to the ISCUS, which Dr Baliga had helped to found and was its life and soul from 1951 up to his last breath. His visit to the then Soviet Union in 1951 at the head of a cultural delegation from India had indeed been a turning point in his life.

Dr Bakya, in this context, rightly provides a critical review of the Indo-Soviet friendship movement, from its early days of spontaneity, triggered by the Nazi aggression against what was then considered the bastion of socialism, to the formation of the Friends of the Soviet Union. The defence of the land of socialism had been the central slogan of this movement. Dr Bakaya fairly objectively assesses the role of the Communists in bringing together on one platform people with sharply differing political views, as also the final takeover of the organisation in the traumatic sectarian period of the CPI, shortly after independence. The earlier phase of the FSU is a very good example of the Communist ideology of combining national and international interests in a given situation. Circumstances rather than consciousness helped such a success.

Dr Bakaya shows how the formation of the ISCUS was a conscious decision to meet the specific requirements of the time. It was the formation of an all-India organisation first that initiated the spread of the movement to the other States. The emphasis had changed from defence of the Soviet Union to friendship in mutual national interest in the changed correlation of international forces. A more chastened CPI dissolved the FSU and provided the core cadres for the movement in its new form. Thus a continuity was also maintained.

Building the ISCUS was no easy task. The two years of sectarianism had strengthened the prejudices against Indian Communists. The government under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru was in the process of formulating the foreign policy of India, based on the principle of freedom from bloc pressures. The prevalent understanding of the leadership of the erstwhile Soviet Union at that time of the character of the Indian Government only helped alienate the Indian leadership.

In this context, Dr Bakaya seems to ignore the inherent hesitation of the Nehru leadership, at this stage, in building close cultural, economic and political leadership with the then Soviet Union. Dr Baliga's contribution to the removal of this mutual misunderstanding was quite considerable, as is evident from Dr Bakaya's book. Dr Baliga insisted on confining the activities of the ISCUS to cultural activities in their widest sense and refused to let it be converted into a non-official mouthpiece of the Soviet foreign policy. Dr Bakaya refers to a number of telling situations which Dr Baliga handled firmly, but diplomatically. He kept the organisation strictly independent of political parties and discouraged the ISCUS office-bearers from direct involvement with a political party.

The glorious chapter of the Indo-Soviet friendship movement seems to appear today to have been an exercise in futility. Much of the character that Dr Baliga had given to the ISCUS has virtually withered away during the last two decades, since his death. Strong ideological overtones have found expression in organisational behaviour patterns. This factor is one of the reasons for the failure of the ISCUS to react to the new situations in a positive manner, as it had been possible, when the change-over from the FSU to the ISCUS had taken place, in the early fifties, under Dr Baliga's leadership.

It is in the national interest of both India and the newly independent states that have emerged out of the erstwhile Soviet Union, that the friendship movement should continue. Its nature and organisational forms must necessarily change. This demands bold and dynamic thinking and action on the part of the leadership of both the ISCUS and the FSU (re-established on the initiative of the late Mrs Indira Gandhi as a parallel organisation, as part of her effort to establish her personal hold over every institution).

Dr Baliga's way of guiding the ISCUS might have many lessons for us today. In this context Dr Bakaya has done full justice to his subject, but for a surfeit of quotations from writings of other contemporaries of Dr Baliga, as these often repeat what has already been established. ■

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Dilemmas of Democracy

RANJANA SUBBERWAL

A mad euphoria has gripped the world today—the euphoria of democracy. Those who have already achieved it are wildly canvassing for it. Those who have not, are rushing to embrace it. In the eyes of the world, democracy stands for all that is good, desirable, wonderful. Such consensus is unprecedented in the history of mankind. So is the intensity and scale of the euphoria. In this mad race, a predictable fall-out has been an unrealistic exaggerated version of the positive aspects of democracy. In euologising it, the world has overlooked the fact that democracy is a system in contradiction with itself. It has a way of tiring, wasting, stifling itself. It nurtures those very forces which destroy it. History is a witness to this.

Over the years, democracies the world over have gone through turbulent times. European democracies like Italy and Germany had fascist experience after World War I. A number of Lation American nations have constantly alternated between democratic governments and dictatorships. Many Middle East, Asian and African nations had nurtured the dream of democracy and had brief interludes of it to finally slip into totalitarianism. Indian democracy is constantly hopping from one crisis situation to another.

This perennial turmoil of democratic nations is due to a host of factors like pluralism, weak nationalism, poverty, illiteracy and the like. However, it has to do above all with the value-base of democracy which is fragile to the point of easy destruction.

Liberty, equality and fraternity are the three pillars of democracy, the trinity capable of creating a heaven on earth or hell. The democratic world view perceives that man is basically good, rational, sensitive—capable of self-restraint. Reason is the hallmark of his thinking, not tyranny nor demagoguery.

Given this perception, it follows that man deserves freedom. There is no need to control him. Democracy thus offers to man the right to live the way he likes to live. It offers a wide spectrum of constitutionally guaranteed liberties to him—the liberty to dissent, to profess one's religion, to social mobility, to select rulers.

Intertwined with liberty is the value of equality. The right to live the way one wants to live extends to everyone equally. It is conceded that all persons may not be equal but they have equal opportunities in education and employment.

Liberty and equality would merely be empty words without an assumption of fraternity. That man is capable of harmonious togetherness is an essential condition of democracy. This then, in essence, is the value base of democracy. It is the ultimate dream of mankind The reality, however, is far from the dream.

As a value, liberty is the pride of the democratic system. It has the mystical awe inspiring quality about it which has fascinated man for ages. Men have fought, died, sacrificed for liberty. But they have rarely been prepared for or understood the consequences of liberty. They have often correlated a liberal order with a prosperous, peaceful organised order, not realising that often it is just the opposite of this.

Freedom of expression which is the hallmark of a liberal order often increases tension and creates disorder. Thousands of innocent people may be dying in Saddam Hussain's Iraq and nobody knows. In fact despotic regimes often give an impression that all is orderly and peaceful. In free societies, on the other hand, a small miscarriage of justice is widely reported and could create riots. It is ironical that smaller crimes of liberal societies loom large and large-scale crimes of totalitarian states go unnoticed. Liberty thus, sharpens the desire to revolt to curb injustices.

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STALIN 'S Soviet Union was an organised, more cohesive state, so was Akbar's India. Their contemporary democratic faces are torn by turmoil, secessionist movements, revolts. A liberal order gives basic autonomy to men and institutions which often makes cohesive orderly living difficult. How automomy gets translated as secession it is difficult to say. But soon enough, groups, sub-groups and then ever smaller groups start striving for independence. The baffling question is—where should these sub-divisions end? It is true that as soon as the erstwhile Soviet Union gave basic liberty to her people, each state wanted to be independent of the Soviet Union. As a result, a number of independent nations emerged. Russia, the largest among them, is still struggling to settle as a nation but already there are rumblings among the Muslim population of Russia for independence. The situation is more like onion peels. You remove one and the next one is beckoning you to remove it too. If every group wants secede how can any group life be possible? And then, if there is no group, what sense can liberty make?

It is ironical that liberal democracy knows best how to dig its own death-knell. It not only encourages but even pampers dissent. And then, it cannot use force to curtail it without having guilt pangs. Frequent use of force amounts to demolishing democracy. If, on the other hand, force is not used on certain occasions, it may be suicidal for a nation. A number of Third World countries have had to snatch stability from the jaws of democracy.

History tells us that leaders who shouted loudest for liberty and led aggressive movements for it themselves became despotic rulers and produced worst tyrannies. Cromwell was worse than Charles I, Henri Christophe than the French colonial rulers. It is because a realisation soon comes that the liberty of the leaders gets curtailed by the liberty of the masses. Thus, successful movements for liberty have often led to despotic rulers specially in societies where there were no strong groups to counter such a move.

As a part of their liberalisation programme, the countries of the erstwhile Soviet Union need to implement severe reforms like getting rid of unnecessary bureaucrats, closing down inefficient plants, removing subsidies, allowing prices to shoot up to the market level. These cannot be easily implemented in any political set-up, least of all in a democracy where people have the basic freedom to put impediments in its way. Boris Yeltsin, the popular leader of the Russian people, is no longer so popular. While he is regularly mobbed by people with complaints of price rise, his own Cabinet has started calling his reforms 'draconian'. That time is not far away when one will hear the man on the street eulogising communism. Under these circumstances one need a crystal-ball to predict that if Yeltsin does not want to go into political obscurity, he will have to perform an about face, reverse the process of reforms (at least partly) and indulge in populism to remain in power.

In fact a democracy can never be an unbiased, objective system. There are pressures and counter-pressures intertwined with the interests of the politicians to create a politics of populism, a dreadful disease of a democracy.

Human rights are an intergral part of a liberal order. These, however, often become its shackles. There is no doubt that resistance of oppression is a right of every man but this does not call for undisciplined trade unionism. Rights are essentially intertwined with discipline and duties. How can A's right to certain welfare scheme be fulfilled if B does not fulfill his duty of paying tax to the state? Duties and rights are correlative concepts. By neglecting duties, we actually weaken the very system that gives us the rights.

Liberty makes little sense without equality, equality without liberty is raw tyranny. But equality and liberty are like the opposite shores of a river. It is impossible to make them meet in reality. By offering liberty to the people, the society offers them the right to go in different directions, to expand, to acquire. This can only be achieved by eliminating all differences and blocking the efforts of those who want to move in different directions. This is only possible if a powerful group stops any such attempts on the part of the people, thus giving a death blow to liberty. Democracies often react to this inbuilt contradiction by indulging in complex jugglery like sprinkling reservations here and creating monopolies there.

Winstion Churchill had once called democracy the "least unsatisfactory of all forms of government". He was probably right. It is, however, a bitter sweet pill which the world is falling over each other to eat not realising that it is a beckoning goal, not a safe harbour. An appropriate postscript to democracy would be 'fragile, handle with care'. ■

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Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, Global Hegemonies and Government of India

B.K. ROY BURMAN

Currently there are two international instruments exclusively related to the tribal and analogous peoples: the ILO Convention 107 of 1957 concerning the protection and integration of indigenous and other tribal and semi-tribal populations in independent countries and the ILO Convention 169 of 1989 concerning indigenous and tribal peoples in independent countries. Another international instrument, namely, the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is in the process of being finalised for the consideration of the UN General Assembly in 1993. The impetus for these international instruments have mainly come from the historical and ongoing processes of genocide and ethnocide in the Latin American countries. Not that other parts of the world are free from these processes; but conditions differ and the validity of any international instrument depends on its ramifications in specific contexts.

While the first Convention considers the tribal and indigenous populations as representing a socially and economically less developed stage than that of the general population of the country in a unilinear schema of human evolution, the later Convention emphasises viability and distinctiveness of tribal and indigenous social entities. In the era of the global quest for being rooted in its surroundings, for restoration of ecological ethics, for liberation from dehumanising elitist sophistry, for primacy of moral compact of the community over the coercive power of the state, the Convention of 1989 is certainly an improvement over the Convention of 1957. Both the Conventions, however, recognise the tribal and indigenous as distinct, though analogous, social historical categories. 'Tribe' is used in both in a generalised wider sense which also subsumes the indigenous who are descendents of the inhabitants of a country or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonisation. The records of international exchanges which took place at the time of formulation of both the Conventions make it clear that the term 'indigenous' referred to the Amerindians, the original inhabitants of Australia, and the islanders of the Pacific Ocean.

While the Convention of 1989 shows more sensitivity to the dignity and aspirations of human social formations of diverse types it also compromises with powerful political interests almost unabashedly.

In respect of the tribals, it rightly and consistently uses the term 'people', implying thereby recognisable legal, political and social entities; but in case of the indigenous it uses the term 'population' in their pre-invasion stage. This is patently wrong. In many cases the invaders had to enter into formal treaties with the indigenous political authorities; this itself is an evidence that they were peoples. It is not fortuitous that even then the ILO Convention does not consider them as peoples at that stage. The Convention itself mentions that in addition to the agencies it is required by statute to consult, it has formally consulted only one outside technical body, namely, Inter-America Indigenous Institute—an outfit of the Organisation of American states (OAS). Besides, before the finalisation of the Convention several ILO supported seminars had taken place, all in America, even though the Amerindians constitute hardly one per cent of the indigenous and tribal peoples of the world. The composition of the 18 member expert group set up by the ILO was also strange. India with the largest tribal population in the world (about 30 per cent) was represented by a representative of the employers. He may be an expert on many things, but certainly his name has never been heard in matters concerning the tribals. There is no dearth of talent among the tribals of India; and there are certainly many among the academics of the country with international standing. It is not known what role the Government of India played in the selection of the experts.

In any case, with its humanist face, the Convention of 1989 has protected the interests of the European invaders, in the countries where the indigenous peoples have been reduced to numerically small ethnoses, and at the same time it will create complications for Asia and parts of Africa. European settlers invoke the concept of *terra nullius* for asserting their rights over the territories in respect of which they did not enter into any treaty with the indigenous political authorities. But if indigenous inhabitants are recognised as peoples, the doctrine of *terra nullius* will not stand and wholesale rights over all territories even outside the reserves and the already delineated territories (which were reduced under duress) will have to be renegotiated. This has been cleverly evaded. In the meantime in most of the American countries as well as in Australia and New Zealand, an accommodative political and legal process has been

The author, a retired Professor of the Visva-Bharati University, Santiniketan, is currently a Visiting Senior Fellow of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, New Delhi.

initiated and has made considerable progress during the last two decades. Besides, multinational corporations mostly based in America or functioning in close collaboration with organisations like the World Bank, GEF have established almost complete grip over the resources of the indigenous peoples in those countries, so that the formal right of self-management or even self-determination has little practical meaning. Even the governments, including that of the USA, are operating like executive committees of the multinational enterprises. The role of the USA at Rio bears testimony to such a development. Moreover, the minuscule size of the indigenous peoples, land-man ratio, the level of skill formation to manage modern technology are also relevant factors which make accommodative politics feasible in those countries.

But in Asia and parts of Africa the situation is different. The terms 'territory', 'ownership rights', etc. have many nuances, and have been complicated by colonial legacies. While the Convention does not attend to these conceptual nebulae, the governments in many of these countries have been fighting a grim battle against international hegemonies. By and large tribal peoples in these countries are also partners in this struggle against the emerging hegemonic world order, because of the very nature of their modes of production. At the same time their legitimate political, economic and cultural rights are yet to be adequately satisfied in the state processes of many of the countries. Progressive forces in Asia are, therefore, to fight on two fronts: first, to resist the ruthless onslaught of global hegemony, which may be hydra-headed but is really a single entity; simultaneously the fight to ensure the satisfaction of democratic and human rights of tribal and analogous social formations requires relentless action to expose the ugly face of global hegemony under the humanist cover of the ILO Convention; it also requires real dialogue with the tribal and other marginalised peoples in all the concerned countries of Asia and Africa.

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MENTION has been made earlier of the Universal Declaration of the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples which is under the process of finalisation under the aegies of the UN. This is to be seen in two contexts: the global anti-colonial heritage and the global game-plan of the hegemonic interests.

Let us first consider the global anti-colonial heritage. During the UN General Assembly session in 1982, Spain together with some European and all the American states proposed that 1992 be designated by the UN as the Year of Columbus to celebrate the 500th year of his landing on American soil. This was opposed by the countries of Africa and many others joined their rank on the ground that this event really marked the beginning of colonialism. Instead, 1993 has been designated as the Year of the Indigenous Peoples. Irrespective of whether some peoples in a country are indigenous or not, all progressive forces in the world should observe the year. India particularly should do it to reaffirm her anti-colonial heritage.

The game-plan of the hegemonic interests is revealed in the apparently cogent succession of events with all the elements of surprise befitting the tinsel world.

In 1972 the UN Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities appointed Martinez Cobo as a Special Rapporteur to conduct a broad study of the problem of discrimination against the indigenous peoples. As already mentioned, this was in the context of the restless assertion of the Amerindians. There is no universally accepted definition of indigenous people. But as reported in 1987 by the Independent Commission on International Humanitarian Issues (ICIHI)—a body close to the UN, whose reports are mandatorily presented to the General Assembly by the Secretary-General—the UN uses a working definition provided by the Special Rapporteur, which states that "indigenous populations are composed of the existing descendants of the peoples who inhabited the present territory of a country wholly or partially at the time when persons of a different culture or ethnic origin arrived there from other parts of the world, overcame them and by conquest, settlement or other means reduced them to a non-dominant or colonial situation". There was a general understanding that this working definition applied to the descendants of the pre-invasion peoples of the countries mentioned earlier.

In the seventies at the initiative of the Amerindians, particularly Canada, a World Council of Indigenous Peoples (WCIP) was formed; it agitated on a number of human rights issues including cultural, economic and political rights. The UN accorded observer status to the WCIP. In May 1982 the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the UN authorised the Human Rights Commission for the establishment anually of a Working Group on Indigenous Populations to review the developments, promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous populations and to give special attention to the evolution of standards concerning the rights of indigenous populations. When this authorisation was made, it obviously related to the countries which were subjected to invasion and colonisation by populations coming from other parts of the world.

It may not be fortuitous that after the proposal of some of the European and all American governments to celebrate 1992 as the Columbus Year under the aegies of the UN was rejected by the anti-colonial forces throughout the world, the Special Rapporteur submitted a report after a lapse of 11 years in 1983 expanding the scope of the concept 'indigenous' to cover isolated and marginal populations in other parts of the world. It is on record that though the report is in the name of Cobo—a Cuban national—the actual work was done by a UN staff member, A.D. Diaz, a Guatemalan national. Another development that took place shortly after this is also worth noting. In 1985, the UN General Assembly authorised the creation of a voluntary fund to be administered by a Board of

Trustees, to assist the spokesmen of the indigenous populations, to attend the meetings convened by the Working Group.

A few words about the composition of the Working Group, the Board of Trustees and the sources of the voluntary fund would be pertinent here.

The Working Group consists of one representative each from Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America and Western Europe and others (that is, the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand). Thus, while according to UN sources about 80 per cent of the indigenous and tribal peoples belong to Asia, only one person represents this continent. Asia was first represented by a Chinese, now by a Japanese—none of them is an indigenous or a tribal. Actually the Working Group is dominated by persons of European origin. The five-member Board of Trustees is expected to have at least one indigenous member, but he is not an Indian. As regards the source of the voluntary fund, the present writer has some information only for 1990-91. The contributors were the governments of Canada, Cyprus, Finland, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, Sweden, Switzerland and Tunisia and also the Shimin Gaikai Centre of Japan, the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan, the Association of Constructing Companies in Hokkaido, the Association of Paving Companies of Hokkaido, and the Association of Chambers of Commerce, Japan. It is interesting to note that while Japan is so concerned about the indigenous peoples outside, it does not treat the Ainus, who bear similarity to the Todas of India and have a distinct way of life, as indigenous.

With the assistance received from the 'voluntary fund', the spokesmen of the indigenous peoples are participating in the open meetings convened by the Working Group at Geneva (except for one at Nuu in Greenland).

It is not known how the spokesmen are selected. The chance factor seems to have played a crucial role in the selection of the spokesman of the tribals of India. He hails from West Bengal and belongs to a Scheduled Tribe community. He was a Deputy Minister at the Centre for sometime. As claimed by him in several publications, he was travelling in Europe in 1985 and by chance came to know of the meeting. He attended it and since then he is functioning as the spokesman of the 70 million tribal peoples of India. On his initiative an Indian Council of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (ICITP) has been established, the effective membership of which is confined to a few significant personalities of the Chhotanagpur region. Apart from the gentleman mentioned, two or three others have also attended some of the meetings convened by the Working Group. But in most cases they were sponsored by other agencies and had no relation to the ICITP.

In these meetings, the Government of India's representatives also participated as observers. The performances of the representatives of the ICITP and the Government of India have been not only dismal but amateurish. They hardly show an awareness of the fact that the UN Working Group was, through the Universal Declaration of the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples, evolving an operative framework of far-reaching implications for the international economic and political order. The spokesman of the ICITP has year after year used these meetings like a mofussil court to make informed and uninformed charges against the Government of India. When one goes through his statements one is amazed how little he knows about the tribal peoples outside Chhotanagpur. Some of the charges he makes are actually the aspirations of the concerned tribal peoples and had the Government of India really done these, they would have been happy. The representatives of the Government of India, while taking a position that it is difficult to say who are and who are not indigenous in the country, mainly confined their role to refuting the charges made by the ICITP representative recognised by the UN Working Group. On one or two occasions they made observations on some minor matters included in the Draft Declaration of the Working Group. The unconcern about the wider system which is being evolved and which ultimately will go to the UN General Assembly is a manifestation of the inane manner in which the foreign policy-planners are functioning in India.

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NOW let us come to the Draft Declaration. One draft was circulated in 1988. It was substantially modified in 1991 and is currently under discussion for further modifications. The salient points of the 1991 Draft Declaration are as follows: (a) it does not formally define the term, 'indigenous'; though, as mentioned earlier, there is a working definition in the UN, it has not been expressly stated here; (b) though the current chairperson of the Working Group, who has been holding the position since 1984, has in a different forum ruled out the right of secession and has differentiated between internal self-determination and external self-determination, the Declaration speaks of the indigenous peoples' right of self-determination under international law which is contrary to her statement; (c) the right to pursue freely their own economic, social and cultural development through international cooperation has been incorporated; (d) the right to maintain their distinctive relationship with their lands, territories and resources, and entitlement to intellectual property rights have been envisaged.

The issues that arise out of these salient clauses in the Draft Declaration will be briefly considered. Though the Declaration does not define the term 'indigenous', it has been treating as indigenous peoples certain formal organisations (like the International Organisation of Indigenous Resource Development, World Council of Indigenous Peoples) and has been treating certain others (like the Hamong People, the Indian Council of indigenous and Tribal Peoples) as the indigenous peoples' nations and organisations. If there is no other hidden meaning in such a classification, the Working Group has obviously functioned arbitrarily. But there is a more serious incongruity. The ICIHI has reported that in Europe, except for the peoples in the circumpolar region (the Samis and the Inuits, the unique peoples like the Basques, the Catalans, the Romany Gypsies) are not to be treated as indigenous on the plea that Europe was not under colonial rule; but at the same time the tribal peoples of Thailand, the national minorities of China are considered as indigenous even though these countries were not under colonial rule. The Tamils in Sri Lanka have been categorised as indigenous presumably because of their political marginalisation, but not the similarly marginalised Wales of the UK or the Brittons of France.

Similarly in Africa the Bushmen, the Pastoralists and a few selected peoples are indigenous to the exclusion of others. Such double standard is bound to cause suspicion among the Asian and African countries. As regards the right of self-determination, the silence about the actual import of the term is not the problem; the problem lies in the conflicting indirect projections in different paras of the operative part of the Declaration.

In 1991, some young tribals from Asia demanded the right of secession to be clearly mentioned in the Declaration. One need not be too much perturbed by such statements; one should take these as expressions of understandable angry mood of the youth. One must also envisage a considerable change in the international boundaries in the twentyfirst century as a natural process. At the same time it should be firmly stated that outside manoeuvres will not be tolerated. So long as hegemonic power centres exist, either directly operating by a caucus of state institutions (G-7, for instance) or indirectly operating through international agencies, the right of self-determination, for the purpose of the present declaration, should mean nothing more or nothing less than internal self-determination. This certainly includes the right to maintain a distinctive *relationship* with lands, territories and resources and entitlement to intellectual property rights conceptualised in specific historical normative contexts. But in this while the records of almost all the states all over the world are questionable, the records of the international agencies are also equally, if not more, despicable.

The ICHIC has charged the World Bank of duplicity. In 1986 the World Bank's legal expert had to publicly admit that the Bank's publication does not describe the Bank's policy about the tribals and indigenous peoples. The real policy is contained in a confidential document which was not made public. A report published in the *Cultural Survival Quarterly* in Winter 1992 charges the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), an ancillary of the UN system, to have destroyed the hunting ground of the pygmies in Africa. The report also indirectly alludes to the World Bank's complicity. In the contemporary world the rights of the tribals and indigenous peoples is enormously affected by the international agencies. Until and unless the Universal Declaration specifically defines the roles of these agencies and lays down universally acceptable procedures for monitoring their operations, the right of the indigenous peoples to obtain international aid will at best promote green capitalism and cause damage to the physical environment and at worst will destroy the internal self-regulatory mechanism of the concerned communities and make the right of self-determination a ghost structure without content.

The need for surveillance over the activities of the international agencies comes out poignantly in the Draft Declaration itself. Though the original draft of the Declaration speaks of intellectual property rights of the indigenous peoples, the World Intellectual Property Organisation(WIPO), again an ancillary of the UN, has informed the Human Rights Commission in 1991 that it does not recognise the entitlement of the indigenous peoples as such to intellectual property rights. The justification given by the WIPO is an ideological one, rooted in the positivistic philosophy of law. It seems that the chairperson of the UN Working Group has failed to overcome this ideological roadblock. One wonders whether an alternative draft, much diluting the intellectual property rights of the indigenous peoples, now presented by her, is not really capitulation to the international vested interests operating through a UN forum.

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WITH this record of cynical operation, the international agencies have started to parade their fangs even before the Draft Declaration has been considered and adopted by the UN General Assembly. Though the Government of India has taken a formal stand in the UN forum about the difficulty of exclusively identifying any group of people as indigenous in India, the World Bank in its Operational Manual has on its own decided to term the Scheduled Tribes as indigenous peoples. Clearly, this is a case of misdemeanour on the part of the World Bank for which it should be made to apologise and which should be formally denounced by the UN.

The criticism against the unilateral action of the World Bank transgressing the soverignty of India does not, however, mean that none of the tribal peoples in India can be called indigenous. Whatever the definition of indigenous, the Jarawa, the Sentinelese, the Great Andamanese, the Onges, the Nicobarese and the Sompens of the Andaman and Nicobar Group of Islands are certainly indigenous peoples. Without foreclosing the rights of others, many of the other tribal communities in India can also be considered as indigenous in the sense of their being relatively more committed to ecological ethics, more guided by historicalethical sanctions in their social relations than by the coercive power of the state, more sensitive to the muse of nature than to the guiles of Mammon, more in harmony with their social self than is the case with the atomised individuals of the sophisticated societies. To start with, for operative purposes, the Government of India could have accepted the Scheduled Tribes as a special category of indigenous peoples in India. This would have invested them with the political and moral authority to seek the cooperation of the tribal and the other indigenous leaders not only of India but also of other countries, to decide whether there should be one Universal Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples at this stage or whether there should be a transitional phase with history and ecology-specific declarations of rights; whether and how the single or the multiple declarations should cover the international agencies also; and whether the composition of the Working Group could be more democratic and participatory by giving weightage to the proportion of the indigenous and tribal peoples to the total numerical strength of this category of peoples globally.

As it is the Working Group projects an image of the classical "White man's burden" and the Draft Declaration tends to divert to a considerable extent history's inevitable explosion on the countries of Asia and Africa, after taking care that Europe remains practically untouched by it, and after building up conflict management strategies in favour of the power elite of European origin in America and Oceania. Even then the Draft Declaration has not completely succeeded in its cover-up game. The Grand Council of the Maoris of New Zealand charged that it will divide the authentic indigenous peoples of the world. Others have criticised that though in the meetings convened by the Working Group the status of treaties and agreements that the invaders entered into with the indigenous peoples were discussed, these have not been incorporated in the Declaration. This of course cannot be expected under the dispensation of the "White man's burden". Again, a careful scrutiny of the documents show that the nature of the mandate communicated to the Working Group has not been included in the Declaration. It seems that some UN officials have exceeded their brief. The statement made by the ILO's official representative at the ninth meeting of the UN Working Group also requires to be examined from the point of propriety.

This state of affairs has became possible because of the unimaginative uninformed and passive role played by the Government of India and the less-than-responsible behaviour of some of the tribal leaders. But it goes to the credit of the latter that when the real nature of the functioning of the UN Working Group and the ancilliary agencies was explained to them with documentary evidence, they responded positively and issued a statement pointing out the incongruities of the Draft Declaration; they also requested the General Secretary of the Working Group to clarify certain positions to the chairperson of a Committee set up in the valedictory session of a seminar organised by the ICITP. When some of the facts were brought to the notice of the Prime Minister, he immediately responded but the bureaucracy operated in a manner which, while covering up their earlier amateurish activity, will only lead to capitulation to the manipulative politics of the international vested interests.

The bureaucracy of the External Affairs Ministry should also be held responsible for creating a condition which made the tribal leaders ineffective in the international fora of the tribal and analogous peoples. One of the measures of the proper functioning of a government is the extent to which it can ensure that due respect and dignity are accorded to the different social categories of its citizens in the international fora of the peoples of the same social category. In this the Governement of India in general, and the External Affairs Ministry in particular, has much to explain.

It is necessary that not only the government and the tribal leaders of India should move together to thwart the international hegemonic game-plan but also that all the SAARC and ASEAN countries and the now moribund Afro-Asian forum should be involved in the rapidly gathering historic confrontaion with the West with its saintly garb. There is a danger that the combined action of these fora rather than being directed against world hegemonies may be directed against the tribal and analogous peoples themselves. Perhaps this the international hegemonics want. But prudence and the humanist heritage of these countries require that the SAARC and ASEAN countries, even in their self-interest and transcending the same, go for composite partnership with the tribal and-analogous peoples of this part of the world, so that the internal right of self-determination of these peoples strengthens the basis of the external right of self-determination for the region as a whole in the emerging world economic, technological and political order.

As it is, many African and Asian countries, including India, have unedifying skeletons in their cupboards. While resisting global hegemonic designs, they should devote the International Year of the Indigenous Peoples to deep self-introspection, to cleanse the debrises of the much outmoded thought, and build up edifices of authentic partnership among all sections of their peoples. ■

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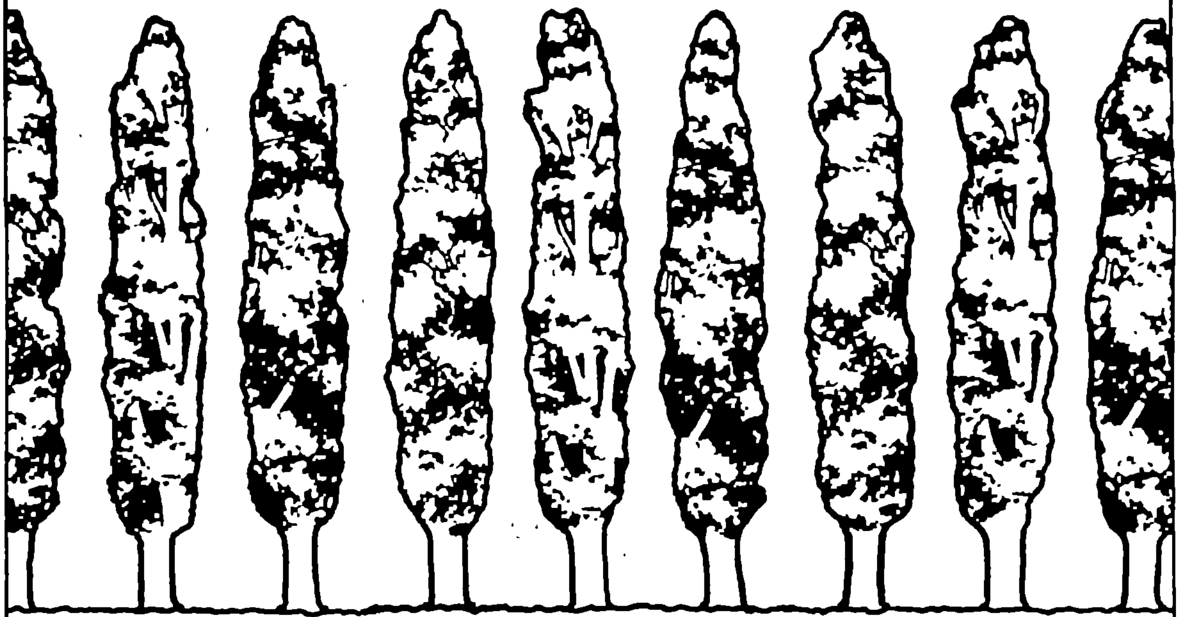

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PM's Speech at NAM Summit ● Ayodhya in Indus Valley

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POLITICAL NOTEBOOK

Mandate from Jakarta

Since the inception of the non-aligned movement it has been the butt of hostile attacks from all sides but more particularly the ultra-Right Western leaders beginning with John Foster Dulles who had denounced the concept of non-alignment as "immoral". Indeed by such a characterisation Dulles had not only unconsciously brought into focus the moral force of the NAM as a movement for global peace and abjuration of confrontation based on military power blocs, he had also unwittingly highlighted the potentiality of the NAM to emerge as a tribune of the developing nations' resistance to neo-colonial pressures aimed at subverting their independence and sovereignty.

The Tenth Non-Aligned Summit's success lies in the feverish attempts among interested quarters both in the developing states and the Western countries to deride the movement throughout the Jakarta meet. The publicity given to the movement through such endeavours speaks volumes of its importance and relevance as a vibrant body of the developing countries intensely interested in ensuring their independent self-reliant advance thwarting the dictates of the Western powers who have tasted blood after the systemic collapse in Eastern Europe and the former USSR.

The NAM has all along been a highly democratic movement where differences of opinions on contentious issues have been voiced in the open without let or hindrance. Only those with short memory would seek to ridicule the divergent views publicly articulated on such questions as the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the US-enforced "no-fly zone" on Iraq.

At the Seventh Non-Aligned Summit in New Delhi in March 1983 similar divergent views were expressed at the closing ceremony by the delegations of Afghanistan (on the consensus document's formulation on the Afghan developments) as well as Iran (on the stand taken by the Summit with regard to the Iraq-Iran war). Both the delegations were allowed to place on record their reservations to the consensus document thereby testifying to the essentially democratic character of the NAM's functioning that distinguishes it from monolithic organisations.

These differences notwithstanding, the Jakarta Message is a clear evidence of the biggest Third World forum's determination to unitedly resist Western moves to impose a world order that would guarantee the hegemony of the West in general and the US in particular. Hence the Summit's call for shaping a new international order through the "irreplaceable" role of the UN and the institution of a high-level NAM working group entrusted with the task of concretising proposals for restructuring and democratising the UN system. Only those suffering from political myopia would fail to grasp the value of such steps.

Similarly, it was of no mean significance that there was no mincing words in rebuffing Western machinations against the developing states:

> No country... should use its power to dictate its concept of democracy and

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human rights or to impose conditionalities on others.

Likewise, while placing on record its dismay over the failure to continue the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations, the Jakarta Message urgently called upon the developed states "to ensure without further delay a balanced, equitable and satisfactory conclusion of the Round which takes into account the interests of all parties, especially the development needs and concerns of the developing countries".

The Summit's plea for a binding international instrument to end "reprehensible trade practices" was also as much noteworthy as its decision to set up a joint committee to coordinate efforts and strategies with the Group of 77. According to the Jakarta Message:

> We see South-South cooperation as vital for promoting our own development and for reducing undue dependence on the North

Acceptance of the Indian amendments to the draft of the Message on the sections relating to terrorism and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons enriched the final document and undoubtedly made it all-comprehensive. Of no less importance were the doucment's emphatic support for the Palestinian cause and the direct attack on the US for its activities against Cuba for over three decades.

What do all these signify? They underline the fact that after three years of uncertainty the NAM has demonstrated its vitality to survive the heavy odds confronting it and its capacity to reinforce its unity to protect, safeguard and promote the interests of the Third World in the altered global landscape of 1992.

Pakistan's failure to draw maximum mileage by raising the Kashmir question at the Summit has been prominently projected in our media. But what has not been brought into focus is the fact that while India's overall performance at Jakarta was unexceptionable, its low-keyed response to crucial issues revealed the constraints and limitations of our government due to a variety of factors including its submission to the US-dominated multilateral financial institutions (that are currently dictating terms even with regard to the dismantling of our public sector). At a time when Yugoslavia is dismembered and Egypt incapacitated on account of its total subservience to the West, India as the remaining founder of the non-aligned movement was expected to play a more active role at Jakarta in keeping with its anti-imperialist heritage. Its inability to do so has exposed a serious weakness which it has to overcome in no time.

That indeed is the mandate from Jakarta.

September 9 S.C

Where is the World Going?

S.G. SARDESAI

On one and the same day, August 21, *The Times of India* published three separate reports on the present-day conditions in California, Russia and Moscow city. They were so graphic that they made me shudder and wonder whether the journey of mankind on this planet was nearing its end. Following is but a skeleton summary of the alarming picture presented by the reports.

I will begin with California as most people already consider Russia as lost. Illusions about the USA are growing, nurtured systematically by interested parties though the day of reckoning is not far off.

California has long been famous as the paradise of the USA, a virtual El Dorado and land of great promise, opportunity and achievement even for dish washers in hotels.

Traditionally, 3500 immigrants have been coming to California per week to seek their fortunes. Four out of ten of them have now to be given welfare doles within a few months after their arrival. Besides, families on welfare are growing four times faster than the State's population. There are proposals to cut the doles drastically and also the expenditures on education and health. Educationists apprehend that university campuses will not open after summer.

Worse still, the number of those fleeing from California is growing. Why? A hotel worker said: "Crime, racial violence, smog and an economy that stinks."

An engineer agreed and added: "The worse economic crisis since the Great Depression." In the last two years 600,000 workers have been retrenched (about a third of the American total). Defence, aerospace industries and banks have thrown out workers in tens of thousands.

California is famous for its sun-beaches and beach swimmers. A record number of beach clubs have closed down due to pollution and criminal gangs formed by the workers and houseless.

The Government of America's wealthiest State is bankrupt. It has a budget deficit of six billion dollars. Not being able to pay its employees for months it started

The author, a veteran CPI leader and Marxist ideologue now in his eighties, is one of the founders of the communist movement in India.

issuing IOUs to them with an arrangement with banks to encash them as a loan to the government. But the Bank of America, the biggest in the State, has stopped honouring them and nineteen others have followed suit.

California has always been a reliable base of the Republican Party. In this century no Republican candidate has been elected as the President of the USA without firm support from California. Recently Bush visited the State for campaigning and even the party workers and his close friends were reluctant to meet him.

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NOW Russia. A year ago when Yeltsin was at the top of his popularity his reforms were welcomed. Democracy and free-market economy were expected to work wonders.

All the illusions now stand shattered. Everything has gone from bad to worse.

People say that democracy is there and they can criticise and even curse the government. But no one in authority listens. So what is the use?

As regards the economic reforms, they are in a mess. Rampant inflation has led to skyrocketing prices. Wages have been raised but prices have risen to far greater heights. So the trickle of essential commodities which has come to the shops remains unsold, purchased only by those who have made money in the black market. Enterprises have accumulated enormous debts, lay-offs and forced vacations without pay are common. A small percentage has become rich and over 80 per cent have gone below the poverty line.

People are getting frustrated and sullen. "It has never been so bad and I am working as a part-time maid to be able to feed my daughter and myself," said an engineer, Rita. A recent poll by a leading newspaper revealed that only 24 per cent of the people trust Yeltsin.

A new danger has recently raised its head in Moscow causing great anxiety to the older generation. Growing unemployment among youth, university students and graduates is leading them to crime, including murders as a regular occupation. Sixtytwo such murders took place between January and July 1992. In the beginning they recoiled from offers to kill persons on payment of big sums of money. Now they are getting reconciled to it justifying themselves as having no other means of livelihood. Said one: "How else shall I repay my debts?"

Who engages the youth? Mafia gangs have developed and compete among themselves for control over new areas of the free market. They do not stop short of murdering their rivals and employ youth and students for the purpose. The inefficiency and unconcern of the police have become an object of ridicule and contempt.

Such is the state of affairs in the two superpowers of the world of yester years.

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WE will cast running glance at a few other countries as an illustration.

The former Yugoslav Federation is broken but Serbia is not prepared to give up its domination over some of the Republics. They are bleeding one another and want to fight each other to a finish. The end is not in sight. The Balkan question seems to dog Europe which is an old tradition.

The Caucasian Republics are at logger heads, it seems for no other reason than that God made them so since their birth.

It will not be long before not a single civilian citizen or civilian activity will be left in Kabul. Its only "citizens" will be murderous gangs claiming to represent Sunnis, Shias, Pakhtoons, various tribals, etc. aided and abetted by Iran, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. Each will be in occupation of a certain part of the city. The condition in Kabul is far worse than that of Beirut when it was sliced up in a similar manner.

In Africa the Western powers have discovered an easy solution to the population problem. They simply allow tens of millions of people to die of starvation and disease.

Coming to our God forsaken country, our North-East has become a boiling cauldron of strife between nationalities, religions, tribes and linguistic groups, practically each against the rest. Before long it will be difficult to locate Assam on the map of India.

Within one year of the launching of the government's new economic policy it is already adding chaos to mass misery. The sky seems to be the limit for our rising prices. Confidential lists of lakhs of workers in government and private services have already been prepared for retrenchment.

Privatisation and globalisation have already created a ghastly problem unprecedented in Indian history. What has come out as regards the activities of the swindlers gang of Harshad Mehta and company is only the tip of the iceberg. But it has already exposed a new nexus between big business, bankers, high government officials and dark figures among ruling politicians for the embezzlement of public and private money. The tentacles of this octopus have spread to the nooks and corners of the country. The transactions made are not in crores but thousands of crores.

The selling of public sector shares for a song and then reselling them in the stock market at a price ten times higher is sheer robbery. No wonder there is a competition between five-star hotels and slums as to which is growing faster.

I will not elaborate all the policies and their effects which are already known.

Dog does not eat dog. But it seems that man, the highest creation of nature, is advancing to devouring his own species. Atomic war and some ecological disaster are considered the greatest danger to life on earth. They have become redundant.

So much is spoken and written about the great prospects of the twentyfirst century. But shall we live to witness its dawn? ■

Reflections on Scam Politics

HARISH KHARE

At first, the otherwise combative Congress spokesmen were remarkably circumspect in reacting to the Minister of State, Rameshwar Thakur's attempt to stonewall the Joint Parliamentary Committee probe into the securities scam. Even the Finance Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, was reported by his well-wishers in the media to have been surprised at the obvious indiscretion of his Minister of State. There were predicable calls for Thakur's resignation. But now Dr Manmohan Singh has given a clean chit to Thakur. And, after the Finance Minister's unequivocal defence of his junior, the Prime Minister can hardly be expected to find anything wrong with Thakur's conduct. (Unless, of course, the Speaker finds Thakur guilty of a breach of privilege.)

However, irrespective of whatever punitive action, if any, is taken against Thakur, the larger question that needs to be answered is: from where in the Indian system do the impulses and reflexes to shield and protect wrong-doers come? Why do seemingly honest and honourable men and women end up behaving in a manner that invites an inference that they are willing to subvert the system in order to safeguard the interests (and skin) of a few people?

These questions may appear to be rather simplistic and in any case can easily and cynically be dismissed/answered by a sweeping generalisation about how the corrupt and corruptible have come to acquire a stranglehold on the institutions of the Indian state. Yes, the evidence of such a strangIehold is overwhelming. Yet the system as a whole continues to pretend to be outraged by the Jaffar Shariefs and the M.K. Chawlas and their acts of omisssion and commission. Also, the system goes about in elaborate fashion wanting to catch the guilty. At the same time sober and responsible people loathe, and rightly so, any kind of witch-hunt that a Bofors scandal or a securities scam may provoke, producing remedies and prescriptions far more disagreeable than the original disease.

The Rameshwar Thakur phenomenon, then, becomes all the more baffling because in India we do not have what can be described as "the establishment" whose interests, right or wrong, ought to be protected, whatever the cost. Once the old ICS generation gradually disappeared, those who came to man the ramparts of the Indian state cannot be said to be characterised by any degree of cultural, class, caste or regional cohesiveness. We have not had an equivalent of the WASP network that obtains in the US. If at all, the only pan-Indian glue and orientation came from a commitment to a welfare state. We never had a ruling *nomenklatura*; only a governing elite.

After 1969, the elites' elan was gone; the demands that the Congress split made on every institution took a heavy toll of the elites' *esprit de corps*. The lumpenisation that was represented by the Sanjay Gandhi phenomenon and later the fashionable disdain for conventions during the Rajiv Gandhi era ensured that even a few surviving establishmentarian instincts were gradually given a decent burial. Not surprisingly, a former close confidant of Rajiv Gandhi would then brashly commit the solecism of questioning a former Army chief's credentials to worry about national honour. Not only do our rulers lack the morals, they also lack the manners becoming of an establishment.

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WE do not have today a ruling family whose excesses and failures need to be protected and explained away at all costs. For long the political dominance of the Gandhi family induced a comforting assumption that crooks flourish in the Indian system because somehow the family's singleminded presumption to rule the country had made it turn a Nelson's eye to those who were bent upon subverting the institutions and/or lining their pockets. This indeed was the only reason why the Bofors controversy became such a passionate and divisive obsession.

Nor fortunately do we have—not yet—a mafia running the country, though the symptoms are quite discernible in a number of States. Had we had a General Noriega or the generals-drug barons alliance that calls the shots in Pakistan, the Rameshwar Thakur phenomenon would have at least made sense. The country also has not yet seen the emergence of industrial houses usurping the state, as in Japan.

On the contrary we have a Prime Minister whose greatest asset is that he is not Rajiv Gandhi and who has been taking pains to assert that crooks would not be tolerated in his Cabinet. Chidambaram has been forced to resign; V. Krishnamurthy even jailed. And notwithstanding Narasimha Rao's far from honourable role in the St. Kitts forgery affair (on an assumption that he had little choice but to go along with the Rajiv Gandhi cabal), the Prime Minister continues to inspire a hope that swindlers and criminals would at least not get the benefit of the doubt from him. Indeed the most striking difference between the Bofors scandal that eventually paralysed the Rajiv Government and the securities scam is the perception that the Prime Minister's Office is not interested in shielding the guilty.

It is also reassuring that in the bureaucracy, judiciary and investigative agencies we still have men and women, though perhaps in a minorty, committed to probity in public life. This is no small blessing. It is also comforting that years of self-abuse have robbed the system of its own hauteur. The relative openness, ensured by a vigilant Parliament and a not always docile press, makes the swindler's task somewhat difficult.

Why, then, do the scoundrels still feel confident that they can have the run of the place? If the securities scam was a systems failure, as Dr Manmohan Singh is never tired of reminding us, someone has benefited unfairly and ought to be punished. A regime keen on its agenda of economic reform should be keen to be seen that it will not give any quarters to anyone wanting to take the system for a ride. Instead, there is a palpable collective urge to protect the guilty. Even if no single individual or a clique can be held to be orchestrating the whole sordid show of commissions, and kick-backs and "extraneous considerations", conditioned reflexes of so many players converge to produce evasive responses when confronted with evidence of wrong-doing. Even before unmarked khaki envelopes were selectively distributed to JPC members, Thakur's arguments were already being bandied about in whispers in New Delhi's salons.

It may well be that the Ramashwar Thakurs have correctly gauged the collapse of central authority in the Congress and, by extension, in the country and are, therefore, quite willing to tell the Prime Minister to forget all this humbug about probity and cleanliness in public life. The Congress—and for that matter any party—has come to attract mostly unemployable men and women who seek public office only because it is the easiest route to instant prosperity. Temptations of the political class have become infectious.

Common political sense would enjoin the Prime Minister to follow the old adage that if the shoe hurts, take it off. But Narasimha Rao will have to summon unusual political courage to wrest the initiative from the manipulators. Whatever stand he takes now will determine how and in what shape the democratic polity survives. ■

(Courtesy: *The Times of India*)

ECONOMY

The Bravado of 'Single Digit Desai'

SANJAYA BARU

The Budget deficit continues to hover in the monetary stratosphere, even if it has managed to come down from the July 24 peak of Rs 14,949 crores to Rs 11,792 crores on August 21. Since September is the last month of the second quarter of this financial year, the Finance Ministry will ensure deficit reduction to meet the IMF's quarterly target. Come October, the deficit might regain height. More creditably, though, the net Reserve Bank of India credit to the Central Government has been kept in check and has come down to Rs 5675 crores as of August 21. This from a peak of Rs 9153 crores on July 17. The explanation for this has already been provided. What the Finance Ministry and the RBI have done is to issue 182-day and 364-day treasury bills to commercial banks, thereby immobilising a part of the liquidity injected into the system by the burgeoning Budget deficit.

However, on the fiscal front it is not the deficit's magnitude which continues to cause concern as much as the rate of inflation, notwithstanding all that brave talk of single digit inflation. Enthusiastic professionals in government are being a bit overly self-congratulatory on that score. They would profit to recall the episode of a Finance Ministry economist estimating the inflationary impact of budgetary proposals to be not more than one per cent. This won the gentleman concerned the sobriquet of 'One Per Cent Singh'! We now have the redoubtable 'Single Digit Desai'! Compliment his bravado, if nothing else, for despite being warned by his more conservative colleagues to go easy on the projections, he has stuck his neck out.

"The rate of inflation is one statistic about which the people think they know better than the government. So don't mess around with it, play straight," advised a seasoned and sober civil servant. "You can claim anything you like, single-digit half a decimal point or what have you, but its my wife's word against yours, and my wife knows better." Give the devil his due, implore the *sarkari* economists, we said it would be single digit and it is here, so why crib? On a point-to-point basis, yes, the wholesale price index, yes. But not yet on an annualised basis and not yet the consumer price index.

It is still an achievement, we have not moved into hyper-inflation despite all that imaginative accounting on the fiscal deficit, so be more charitable, say the single-digit-wallahs. Fair enough, but get the facts right. The rate of inflation, as defined by the wholesale price index, on a point-to-point basis, has come down from 16.7 per cent in August 1991 to 8.34 per cent by mid-August 1992. Throughout August-September 1992 it will remain at such low levels because during the corresponding period last year there was a steep increase. An escalating denominator has reduced the value of the ratio, because the numerator has not gone up at the same rate.

But that's an achievement in itself, grant it to us, says the young World-Bank-economist-turned-*sarkari-babu*. It is not just an increase in the denominator that did it, there has also been a tapering off of the numerator, and that's what made this single digit possible. Granted. Also conceded is that this is quite an achievement considering that from the demand side the government has only administered a mildly deflationary policy.

But why is no one talking about the annualised rate of inflation? Where has that statistic been banished to? According to knowledgeable sources, and that ought to sound impressive to those who refuse to simply take the housewife's word for it, the annualised rate of inflation for 1992-93 is provisionally projected to remain almost exactly at the same level as in 1991-92, that is, 12.5 per cent. When the actual figures are in the housewives will win their bets.

What will add to their cup of woe will be this week's hike in the minimum support price for foodgrains, the proposed hike in petroleum goods' prices and the continuing devaluation of the rupee. In the absence of a strong social security system persistent inflation even at "moderate" levels of 10 to 12 per cent can have a socially insidious and politically debilitating effect. So good luck to Single Digit Desai and may he earn that name! ■

(Courtesy: *The Economic Times*)

India at NAM

PRIME MINISTER'S ADDRESS BEFORE JAKARTA SUMMIT

Prime Minister Narasimha Rao in his address before the NAM Summit at Jakarta on September 2, 1992, spelt out in clear terms India's evaluation of the relevance and perspective before the Non-Aligned Movement. He also pointed to the specific issues which need to be part of the agenda before the Movement. Mainstream *reproduces the text of the Prime Minister's statement in full for reference and further deliberation.* —Editor

I congratulate President Suharto on assuming the Chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Movement. Indonesia is one of the founding members of our Movement, a nation whose independence was, in Jawaharlal Nehru's words, a "reminder that freedom must be won and cannot come as a gift". It is in the fitness of things, therefore, that Your Excellency should be at the helm of affairs of our Movement at this juncture in the international situation. Besides, the age-old multifaceted relations between our two countries have made us in India particularly happy at your taking over the leadership of the Movement.

That the Tenth Non-Aligned Summit is being held in Indonesia at this moment in time when the world around us is again in transformation, is significant. It was in Bandung, thirtyseven years ago, that the seeds of African, Asian and Latin American political consciousness germinated, and later transformed themselves into the sapling of non-alignment in Belgrade in 1961. We pay tribute, in the words of Indonesia's gifted poet, Djoko Damono, as "we edge along the narrow path in bare feet: pilgrims to the memory of those who gave us birth".

That memory endures, as do more recent memories. On behalf of the people and Government of India, I acknowledge with pride and gratitude the tribute this assembly has paid to Shri Rajiv Gandhi. We cherish our memory of the youthful verve and vision he brought to our deliberations. He lived a life true to some of our most vital ideals— selflessness, self-reliance and compassion. He died martyr to another precious ideal, that of peace and harmony between peoples.

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THIRTY years ago we were at a turning point of history. The world seemed to teeter at the edge of a nuclear catastrophe. Jawaharlal Nehru spoke at Belgrade about the need for the non-aligned countries to be sensitive to the new world forces and to the inescapable issue of freedom and democracy within their own societies. His exact words at that time bear a compelling relevance today:

> The most fundamental fact of the world today is the development of new and mighty forces. We have to think in terms of the new world. There is no doubt that imperialism and old-style colonialism will vanish. Yet the new forces may help others to dominate in other ways over us and certainly over the underdeveloped and backward. We have to build in our own countries societies where freedom is real. Freedom is essential because freedom will give us strength and enable us to build prosperous societies

Imperialism and old-style colonialism have vanished. So also has vanished the bloc-confrontation era in which merit was almost invariably measured by bloc identity. Freedom from colonialism has now been coupled with freedom from the bloc syndrome. More and more societies will now discover real freedom, freedom in which one's effort is free, subject to its own inherent strengths and limitations. And yet, we cannot take anything for granted. We have to learn to scrutinise every advice, realising the fact that every advice is bound to contain an element of the adviser's national interest. And we must insist on fashioning our own destiny with our own hands. This is the real bottom line.

To men like Sukarno, Nasser, Tito and Nehru, non-alignment was an inevitable national policy for any self-respecting sovereign state. It meant total freedom in decision-making which gave us a synergistic strength of our own. As a combination of several nations, of varying power and potential, we saw in the Movement a strength derived from solidarity. Three decades later, some palpable dangers have been removed. There are, however, other dangers lurking in the shadows, dangers to which developing societies are particularly prone. That is why the Movement is equally relevant today.

If we go back into history we will see that the Non-Aligned Movement has had several missions at several times. In the beginning it was the mission of decolonisation when many countries were still colonies. Once blocs appeared on the world scene, the Movement's second mission started in that context. It became non-alignment between blocs. Today, the blocs are gone. But there is this great disparity between the rich and the poor nations, the North and the South. Then there are great problems of environment. The new problems that have arisen have to carve out a new role for the Movement. That role will be defined at the Jakarta Summit. The Non-Aligned Movement is a Movement of more than one hundred countries. A majority of humankind is represented in it. The voice of this huge chunk of humanity will have to be listened to. Indeed, in the emerging situation, one can see the steadily growing interest of the developed countries in the Non-Aligned Movement. It is only a question of time before this interest deepens into some kind of involvement. Meanwhile, the Movement must endure.

Talking of the blocs, the need for maintaining independence continues whether there are two blocs or three or none. Taking the essence of non-alignment as the assertion of independence, in that view, non-alignment does not become irrelevant at any time. What is perhaps

(Continued on page 33)

Need to Replace 'First-Past-The-Post' System

SANDEEP SHASTRI

The pressing need for electoral reforms has been recognised by various political parties, academicians and even the Election Commission. Several suggestions have been put forward from time to time with a view to strengthen the electoral process and mirror more effectively the voters' mandate. Unfortunately, precious little has been done in the form of concrete action in this regard. Several Private Members' Bills, which were introduced in the two Houses of Parliament to effect major changes in the electoral process, failed to crystallise as formal legislation due to the lukewarm reaction of the government and the ruling party. The Report of the Committee on Electoral Reforms (popularly known as the Tarkunde Committee Report), appointed by Jaya Prakash Narayan on behalf of the Citizens for Democracy in February 1975, has made several far-reaching recommendations which, if implemented, would go a long way in cleansing the electoral process and help in restoring the credibility of the political system.

It needs also to be emphasised that if the process of electoral reforms is to be meaningful, it must involve a comprehensive overhaul of the multi-track dimensions of the electoral system. These reforms should, among other things, take a second look at the electoral proccess itself and examine alternative systems of representation, restructure the Election Commission and redefine its powers, overhaul the election machinery and formulate a comprehensive election code. An attempt is made here to focus attention on the need to develop alternatives to the 'first-past-the-post' election system.

A major lacunae in our electoral system has been that the electoral verdict is not effectively mirrored in the composition of the legislature. The 'first-past-the-post' system, which is presently followed for the election to the Lok Sabha and the Legislative Assemblies, is largely responsible for this. The first-past-the-post system permits a candidate to win an election from a constituency merely because he/she polls the highest number of votes. The fact that the winning candidate may have secured a very small percentage of the total votes polled in the constituency is of marginal electoral significance. As a result, the present electoral system has resulted in an alarming and disproportionate gap between the percentage of votes polled and the percentage of seats won by the various political parties. In all the ten general elections held so far, on no occasion has the party that assumed power after the elections polled more than 48 per cent of the votes. The percentage of seats won by the ruling party was significantly much higher. The following statistics strikingly portray the discrepancy between the percentage of seats won and that of the votes polled (in box) by the party which came to power after the general elections:

Year of Elections	*Percentage of Seats won*	*Percentage of Votes polled*
1952	74	45
1957	75	48
1962	73	45
1967	54	41
1971	68	44
1977	54	41
1980	67	43
1984	77	48
1989	26	18
1991	45	37

When viewed from the angle of individual candidates elected, a significant number of victors have secured less than 50 per cent of the valid votes polled. In successive general elections the percentage of winners who secured less than 50 per cent of the total valid votes polled is given below:

Year of Elections	*Percentage*	*Year of Elections*	*Percentage*
1952	61	1957	52
1962	56	1967	58
1971	31	1977	12
1980	46	1984	31
1989	45	1991	53

This votes polled-seats won distortion and the fact that a large number of the electoral victors polled less than 50 per cent of the total votes cast is primarily due to the multi-cornered contests witnessed in most of the constituencies. These multi-cornered contests are caused by the sharp increase in the number of contestants—both party sponsored and independents. If in the 1952 general elections, there were 1874 contestants—1341 party sponsored and 533 Independents; in the 1989 general elections there were 5956 candidates—2438 party sponsored and 3518 Independents. The number of candidates rose to a record 9107 in the 1991 general elections. Of these more than 5600 were Independents.

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IN view of the glaring anomalies that have arisen as a result of the first-past-the-post system, there is a pressing

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The author is a Lecturer, Department of Political Science, Bangalore University.

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Indian Foreign Policy: Dilemmas and Challenges

I.K. GUJRAL

The author, the National Front Government's distinguished External Affairs Minister (1989-90) and a former Indian Ambassador in Moscow (1976-80), delivered a lecture on August 10, 1992 at Colombo under the auspices of the Bandaranaike Centre for International Studies. The following article is based on that lecture.
—Editor

In this era of global change old alignments are yielding to new arrangements—that may not be always pallatable but their appraisal and understanding has to be the first task for any foreign policy.

The Cold War was fought by two mutually antagonistic 'international cultures' with all their mite and resources. A systematic global change has ended these agonising cofrontations. With the receding of the two mutually antagonistic power blocks we now witness an emerging pattern of cooperation-cum-competition between their individual members.

If non-alignment looks like a scattered force during this transition, it is because it is yet to recast itself for a new international role.

It was in this context that I had proposed to my Yugoslav counterpart, Budimir Loncar, way back in 1990 to convene an informal meeting of some Foreign Ministers of the leading NAM countries to meet without any formal agenda to collectively apply their mind to the emerging challenges. He agreed and had actually fixed August 10, 1990 for such a seminar but the Gulf crisis intervened and later a deep nemesis in his own country came in the way.

I hope when the much delayed NAM Summit meets at Jakarta, it will evolve new strategy to meet the challenging situations that it faces. Naturally economic cooperation amongst countries of the South should occupy its maximum attention.

The G-15 has met twice at the summit levels but not much has as yet emerged. If the Jakarta meet could agree and set up a Common Development Fund to help and assist development of the least developed amongst its members it would go a long way to acquire relevance and credibility. The Fund should, at least initially, be funded by member-countries committing one per cent of their GNPs to it. This need not be in hard currencies. Commodities and raw materials too could be contributed.

The CDF could also act as a Clearing House for inter-transfer of technologies and scientific manpower.

You will recall that the NAM had, often in the past, intervened to safeguard peace and to push back the colonial and colour-biased regimes. Contemporary situation demands that we collectively work out regimes to release ourselves from the debt traps and economic degenerations. The IMF and World Bank prescriptions are further tightening the noose. Breathers, if at all, provide only a short-lived relief.

The crisis in which we find ourselves entrapped was not inevitable. It is *not* a product of forces beyond our control. Faulty and gross mismanagement of economies on one hand, and myopic security perceptions on the other have caused it.

I also feel that the NAM—in a spirit of trust and cooperation—should initiate a process to evolve systems and attitudes to end regional wars and tensions amongst the neighbours. Of course, without third party interventions.

This may seem a gigantic and impossible task but some countries of Europe have already shown the way by burying their old and time-worn hatches. Why can't we do it? The NAM should also address itself to the task of the changing role and structure of the UN that is being increasingly used—or may one say, mis-used?—by the powerful ones to advance their own interests.

Secretary-General Ghali, I must say, is putting up a brave fight. His recent proposals of an "Agenda for Peace, Peace-Keeping and Peace-Building" deserve full support and active backing.

Any 'New Vision of Future' has to inevitably spell out—as was done by Nehru in the fifties—the anatomy of a '*Just* New World Order' that would inevitably require democratisation of the world bodies: the UN; the Security Council, the World Bank, the IMF, GATT, etc Today the *Security of All Nations*—big or small—inevitably implies *Economic Development of All Nations.*

Before I proceed further I must draw your attention to the emergence of two new villians that have entered the world scene: I am referring to Terrorism and Drug Trafficking. The two are acting in nexus and sometimes they acquire state support and even state sponsorship. An open arms bazar facilitates their activity.

Unless these are curbed by collective action they are bound to destabilise all societies. Even those who may be deriving temporary benefit from their nefarious activities.

Evolving of an equitable environmental regime is another issue of vital interest to all countries of the South. As at present, the dice is loaded in favour of the powerful industrialised nation. Unless we act in unison we may be denied access to the latest technology and left to languish in the dark dungeons of backwardness.

A while ago I had mentioned about my proposal to Loncar—the then Yogoslav Foreign Minister. Isn't it time that we in the SAARC undertake such an exercise to collectively co-relate ourselves with the changing world? I was encouraged to see a recent statement that Pakistan's

Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Kanju, made here in Colombo to the SAARC Ministers. He had spelt out principles that should form the foundation of relations between and among South Asian countries. India is, I am sure, in broad agreement with all the principles outlined by the Minister. Differences in interpretation of some of these could be cleared by bilateral and multi-lateral discussions.

While Kanju had rightly mentioned sovereign equality, political independence, non-interference in the internal affairs, peaceful settlement of disputes, respect for human rights and exercise of self-determination of peoples. I must add at least one more basic principle that would go a long way in strengthening good neighbourly relations: that 'no South Asian country should allow use of its territory against interest of another.'

As a Foreign Minister I had espoused this principle and had further promised that India would abide by this and also never commit its forces outside its territory except in self-defence.

Kanju has also included the principle of self-determination in his proposal. I view it positively since in all developing countries the polity is over-centralised and there is a heavy deficit of self-determination even when the political systems are democratic. Self-determination or participation in self-government must begin at the grassroot level through democratically elected Village Councils and cover the entire political society upwards. Elections must, of course, be free and fair and to establish their credibility a SAARC team of eminent persons should, as a practice, be invited to monitor. A welcome beginning has already been made in Bangladesh and Nepal. This needs to be built into our systems.

Self-determination, however, must not disturb national boundaries as this would engage neighbours in prolonged and agonising mutual hostility, bloodshed and resource drainage.

We see the mushrooming of regional, sub-national and even communal identities all over the world including Europe. Today "Nations are becoming people and peoples are becoming nations." This trend is imposing heavy burdens on governments everywhere, especially in South Asia, where ethnic overflows and other disputes strain inter-state relations and inhibit regional cooperation for peace, security and development.

It is time, may I suggest, that South Asian leaders and opinion-makers engage themselves in free, open-minded discussions to build a regional consensus on the stated basic principles that must govern South Asian relationships.

The framework of such a consensus must keep in mind that South Asia has been slow in imbibing the post-Cold War chemistry of cooperation. Our obsolete mind-sets and faulty security concepts do not permit us to take a holistic view of security.

Deeply ingrained suspicions of the neighbours result in ever-increasing expense on military hardware that in turn intensifies economic distress, internal disturbances and enhance the need for outside help and support.

I believe that the first priority for India's foreign policy is to consolidate and update its cooperative relations with the neighbours, not only in South Asia but also in Central, South-East and West Asia. In all these regions important changes are taking place, and that is where imaginative initiatives are called for.

On a bilateral basis, India has been able to impressively upgrade its relations with its South Asian neighbours. Although, and I say this with deep regret, Indo-Pak relations still remain acrimoniously involved, India's relations with Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka has taken a turn for the better.

Let me, in all humility, claim some credit for espounding a doctrine of 'asymmetry' while sorting out the outstanding issues with Nepal. Though credit for it in a much larger part is due to the first democratic head of Nepal—Bhattarai. He appreciated India's security sensitivities and saw the futility in acquiring mini-arms dumps when the world was moving in other direction and India, in no way, posed any threat.

With the transfer of the Teen Bigha, an outstanding issue has been sorted out—thanks mainly due to the Chief Minister of West Bengal, Jyoti Basu. India is striving, as it must, to amicably resolve the water dispute also with the democratic regime in Bangladesh.

I would very much like to delve at some length and refer to positive changes in Indo-Sri Lankan relations. Since I am going to speak on this subject later this week, I would only say that since the withdrawal of the IPKF in particular both of us are travelling on a friendship trail.

◆

MAY I now divert to another neighbourhood of this subcontinent—Central Asia, where pronounced uncertainties prevail?

Unfortunately, thanks to the legacy of the past, our diplomacy has not devoted much time and attention to this large and diverse region that extends from Mongolia and Kazakhstan to Trans-Caucasia. Its past is wrapped in mystery while its present is uncertain.

There is a sudden explosion of unfamiliar ideas, alliances and conflicts. Almost every new state there is embroiled in a shooting war with the neighbour or is busy in putting down secessionist eruptions.

The idea of a Pan-Turkic bloc threatens the territorial integrities of many countries ranging from the Arabic states to China.

Violent conflicts between nationalisms, ethnic loyalties and religious faiths are already taking a heavy toll. Wars are being fought between Armenia and Azerbaijan and also within Georgia. Tajikistan is fluid and unstable while several federating units of the Russian Federation are up in revolt.

Over-riding all these are the destabilising dynamics of fundamentalism and sectarianism. While an overwhelming majority of the Central Asian people are ethnically Turkic, they are sharply divided as Sunnis, Shias, and Sufis. Sufiism, we might recall, had originated in this region and then there is a vast support for 'Jadidism' or reformism.

None of these states is uni-ethnic. Apart from the presence of other fellow-Turkics, the Russian ethnic component is sizeable. They are mostly skilled workers whose elimination could further intensify the economic crisis. None of these states has been able to sort out the agonising problems of citizenship too.

Constraints of time do not permit me to delve at length and talk about pulls and pressures—both internal and external—that are splitting the societies and arraying them against the neighbours. Azerbaijan is an example worth studying to understand as to what could happen elsewhere in Central Asia and Caucasia. Nationalist upsurge there poses very difficult implications for neighbouring Iran. Ethnically Turkic, the Azerbaijanians do not accept the Iranian model of a fundamentalist state. While they prefer Turkish secular model there is a movement to create a "Greater Azerbaijan" by including 20 million Azeris living in North Iran.

Iran is countering these moves by cultivating the rivals of Azerbaijan, the Christian Armenian and Georgian States. The Azeris also fear that the USA at some stage might support Christian Armenia. Unless the Russian-ed CIS or Russia itself intervenes to end such mini-wars, regional instability could flow out in several directions ncluding ours.

While talking of Central Asia one cannot ignore Uzbeki nationalism that is trying to have its way in Kirghizia. It has already fought a war with the Mesket Turks in Farghana and Tashkent.

Conflicts between various Turkic sub-nationalities are destroying the pipe dream of a greater Turkistan.

I am deliberately not speaking at length about the Persian-speaking Tajik nationalism that is asserting in Afghanistan and is also at war with itself.

These events in the northern neighbourhood of the South Asian subcontinent have serious implications for countries of this subcontinent, particularly, when new ypes of regional groupings are being hawked around.

You will recall that in February of this year the newly ndependent Central Asian states—with the exception of Kazakhstan that preferred an observer status—joined he ECO (Economic Cooperation Council) comprising of ran, Turkey and Pakistan. The ECO summit promised o create a powerful "Islamic Market", and it hoped that Afghanistan too would soon join. Bangladesh has already pplied for its membership. Some scribes are talking of a 'powerful Islamic state' wherein two of its members, Pakistan and Kazakhstan, are already nuclear-weapon tates and several others possess sizeable heaps of fission materials and unaccounted tactical nuclear weapons of he former Soviet state.

But it would be erroneous to go by all that is being laimed. All former members of the Soviet state are very much linked with the CIS and the economy of the Russian tate. Their adverse economic situations make them ulnerable. None of the outside members of the new ECO njoys such affluence as to underwrite their needs for conomic stabilisation and development. Iran can help, ut only marginally.

Iran and Turkey have their own rival regional interests oo. Tehran has spearheaded a Caspian Sea Cooperation Zone to bring in Russia, Kazakhstan besides Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan.

Turkey, on the other hand, is launching a rival Black Sea Cooperation Council to include Turkey, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, Georgia, Moldov and Russia.

If all this is not enough to confuse you, please know that a recently held summit meeting of the Central Asians at Bishkek, the capital of Kirghizia, was averse to setting up of any organisation that would weaken the CIS.

In the last analysis, the policy-makers in Delhi have to keep in mind the future role of Russia in this region and the impulses registered in Chinese Turkistan, Tibet and Afghanistan. The Communist regime of seventy years had succeeded in modernising social attitudes and transformed institutions in the region. Even when religion comes back to them, it is likely to adopt a secular milieu.

While reacting to these happenings India keeps in mind the fact that it enjoys a high prestige in the region. Its relationships with Russia can now be on a more firm footing since it does not contradict any of the American interests. It must be said to the credit of Indian diplomacy that it is not acting in any hasty panic nor trying to transfer the Indo-Pak acrimony to this area.

◆

INDIAN foreign policy cannot be and is not a captive of the situation in the North. It has to pay due, and even slightly more than due, attention to the Oceans around. That is where commonality of interests betwen India and Sri Lanka gets pronounced. In saying this I do not mean, in any way, to understate interests of Maldives, Bangladesh and Pakistan and also the land-locked members of the SAARC—Nepal and Bhutan.

In the Cold War era all of us in the sub-continent alongwith several other nations in the NAM have made gigantic but unsuccessful efforts to transform the Indian Ocean into a Zone of Peace.

With the end of the Cold War, the superpower confrontation in these waters has ended. Then why this mounting expense and ever-increasing military presence?

As far as the countries of the Indian Ocean are concerned, they may sometimes clash with a neighbour but neither individually nor jointly can they pose any threat to US interests.

Sustained blockade and punitive actions against Iraq has unveiled the new US strategy for the Ocean. It is now evolving a security system in the north-western part of the Indian Ocean. It was inducing countries of the Gulf, alongwith Syria and Egypt, to let its troops stay in this region. So far this has not been accepted. But the USA has by-passed their intransigence and has signed a Treaty with Kuwait to achieve the purpose.

You would have seen that exercising the ghost of Saddam Hussain has a purpose for the US strategists: they benefit a great deal from regional rivalries and faulty security doctrines that invite extra-territorial presence and intervention.

It is now clear, if there was ever any doubt, that a subtle US strategy first built Iraq's military machine and then destroyed it.

A myopic Saddam facilitated this task. The war aims of the UN Security Council and the USA did not coincide. Whereas the world opinion was all for the liberation of Kuwait, Washington was more keen to destroy Iraq and eliminate any autonomous power in the Gulf.

James Baker (Jr) had reminded me in those windy days of the Gulf crisis that sources of energy were of vital interest to their security and economy, and the USA could not permit any "demon" to sit on it.

In strategic terms the Russian threat has disappeared from the scene and may not come back for quite sometime. But the US now apprehends threat to her interests from the Third World countries, particularly those which are rushing to develop nuclear weapons. This fear has been aggravated by the prevailing turmoil in the ex-Soviet states and by efforts of Iran and Pakistan to lay their hand on available fission materials there.

◆

INDIAN diplomacy has its own dilemmas regarding the NPT. Constraint of time does not permit me to examine its pros and cons.

But I do wish to take a couple of minutes to look at the contours of Indo-US relations that are presently a hub of India's foreign policy that is faced with complex strategic, political and economic situations.

Dissolution of the Soviet Union has placed the US-India relationship in a new framework. In the contemporary phase, Washington's strategic needs and requirements in South Asia have undergone a change. Eclipse of the Soviet Union is enabling both India and the United States to explore areas of fruitful cooperation. The White House has appreciated the Indian concern and policies regarding Punjab and Kashmir, and it has seen the validity in India's charge regarding Pakistani support to terrorism.

It is an evidence of the changed times and relations that Washington appreciated India's policies during the Gulf crisis and did not press it to join the war symbolically even when Pakistan had lent its troops.

Similarly, Washington is lending its supporting hand to India in the World Bank and IMF fora. This has rescued Delhi from a very trying situation.

The two countries have stepped up interaction among their armed forces but building a cooperative and mutually beneficial relationship is still uneven and time-consuming.

Unilateral invocation of Super 301 and the US reaction to the Indo-Russia agreement for acquisition of cryogenic engines are two such examples that have caused deep concern to India. Research and Development of the Indian space programme occupies a position of importance in India's vision of the future.

In the overall context, it is important for both India and the US to sustain an upswing in bilateral relations and both must continue to discover wider pastures of cooperation avoiding to tread on each other's sensitivities.

This is a sketchy and selective presentation of the issues and situations that face Indian diplomacy which is also, at the same time, confronted with militancies in some of its States. These militancies are aided and abetted from abroad, causing severe strains on our foreign relationships. ■

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Lord Sri Ram of Indus Valley

BHARAT JHUNJHUNWALA

In the early part of this century the remains of a great civilisation were discovered along the Indus river. Many more sites have been discovered since then, and now we can say with certainty that a great civilisation existed in the Indus valley between 2500 and 2000 BC which extended from Rajasthan to Sind. It is our submission that Lord Sri Ram had set his foot on earth in that great civilisation.

The excavation of Indus sites is still continuing and more sites may be discovered. Thus, perhaps no definite "proof" is ever possible. Therefore, our submissions must be treated simply as proposals until better alternatives are proposed.

An important archeological site has been discovered at Kalibangan in Rajasthan. It is located on the southern bank of the Ghaggar river in Ganganagar district. We propose that Kalibangan was Ayodhya of Lord Sri Ram and the Ghaggar was the Sarayu. The site of Mohanjo-daro is located on the west bank of the Indus. We propose that it was Lanka.

Ayodhya

Ayodhya is described as follows in the *Valmiki Ramayan*:

> There is a large district famous by the name Kosala on the banks of the Sarayu. In that district there is a town by the name of Ayodhya which is famous in all lands. That town was built and established by Lord Manu himself. (*Bal Kanda*, 5.4-6)

Kalibangan is located on the southern bank of the Ghaggar river like Ayodhya's location on the bank of the Sarayu.

Ayodhya's having been established by Lord Manu indicates its antiquity. From the chronological horizon of major Indus sites it is apparent that the earliest date yet established for Kalibangan is about 2400 BC, while the earliest town dated so far is Mohanjo-daro at about 2500 BC. (Lal, 6) It is clear that Kalibangan is one of the oldest towns of the Indus civilisation confirming the antiquity of Ayodhya as mentioned in the *Ramayan*.

Kalibangan was finally abandoned at about 1800 BC. Thus the abandonment of Ayodhya by Sri Ram as narrated in *Uttara Kanda* (109.22) may have taken place around that time. On this consideration we may place the events of the *Ramayan* at around 1800 BC.

The structure of Ayodhya is described as follows in the *Ramayan*:

> That metropolis was 12 *yojana* long and 3 *yojana* broad. The raj-marga leading to other districts from there had trees on both ends and therefore appeared distinct from other roads. King Dasarath had populated that Ayodhya on a larger scale than before. (*Bal Kanda*, 5.5-9)

We propose that the *'yojana'* is approximately 80 metres long. Elsewhere in the *Ramayan* the vision of the eagle is mentioned to be 100 *yojana*. (*Kishkinda Kanda*, 58.32) At 80 m per *yojana* this would be 8 km, a plausible distance.

Kalibangan had two sections. Archaeologists have named the smaller western section as the 'citadel' and bigger eastern section as the 'lower town'. The lower town is reported to be 240 m wide. That would be equal to about three *yojana* as per the *Ramayan*. The length of Kalibangan is uncertain:

> Since the southern part has been considerably eroded, it is difficult to be exact about the north-south spread: but it is unlikely to have been less than 360m—the present available stretch of the mound. (Lal, 59)

Relying upon the *Ramayan* description we may postulate that the original length of Kalibangan may have been about 1 kilometre (12 *yojana* = 960 metres). Since the land south of the Kalibangan mound is flat this is quite possible. Even if a fortification wall is located at about 360 m, the town as described in the *Ramayan* may have overflowed its walled boundaries and may have been long.

At Kalibangan four streets have been located in the north-south direction measuring "approximately 1.8m, 3.6m, 5.4m and 7.2m". (Lal, 60) The street having the largest width may have been the "raja-marga" referred to in the *Ramayan*. The significance is that all the streets that have been discovered are not of equal breadth and one does stand out.

We accept that Ayodhya, as described in the *Ramayan*, does not have two separate sections of the town as have been discovered at Kalibangan. However, it is narrated that "King Dasaratha entered the town on the completion of his *yajna*." (*Bal Kanda*, 18.2) This implies that there was a separate place for undertaking the *yajna*. It appears that the citadel may have been this place. The remains of what may have been a *"yajna-shala"* have been discovered in the citadel. Archaeologists report that the southern rhomb of the citadel

> contained primarily a series of mud-brick platforms... access to the top of these platforms was by means of a flight of steps or ramp...atop one of the platforms was located a series of what have been termed as 'fire-altars' in the absence of a more suitable name... the altars were in fact clay-lined pits... within each pit were noted ash and charcoal... on this very platform, a short distance away from these altars, were a well and the remains of a few bath-pavements with attached drains. This kind of lay-out clearly suggests that ceremonial bathing constituted a part of the ritual. (Lal, 57)

No wonder the *Ramayan* narrates how Lord Ram and Sita were bathed or sprinkled with holy water before their coronation. (*Yuddha Kanda,* 128.61) It appears that the citadel was used for the ceremonial function described in the *Ramayan.*

The structure of Ayodhya is described as follows in the *Ramayan*:

> That town had huge gates and doors. There were tall towers. There was a deep moat around it. It was so densely populated that even a small vacant space could not be seen. It was settled on flat land. (*Bal Kanda,* 5.10-15)

Corroborating the description of huge gates and doors, large gateways have been discovered at Kalibangan:

> These gateways were exposed in the northern half of the 'citadel' ... they were controlled by a bastion ... in the southern half of the citadel, two gateways have been located. In the lower city ... two gateways have been found, one on the north and other on the west. The latter was flanked by a simple guard room. The fortification walls at the citadel had towers on their ends. The land around (Kalibangan) is flat, with low sand dunes not very far away. However, in the hey day of the ... settlement when the river flowed past it, the land must have been full of lush fields. (Lal, 55, 56, 67)

These discoveries are in accordance with the *Ramayan* descriptions.

Turning to the economy of Ayodhya, it is described as follows:

> (That town) had different markets. All types of machines and weapons were stocked there. All types of craftsmen lived there. It was full of missiles. Tax paying kings from surrounding countries were always present there. Traders from various countries were coming there. That town was full of early rice. Its water was as sweet as sugarcane juice. (*Bal Kanda,* 5.6-16)

Kalibangan too appears to have had a thriving economy. Archaeologists write that the northern gate

> provided access to the river front. The river, then full of water, must have witnessed boats plying up and down, bringing in surplus foodgrains from the neighbouring villages and carrying back manufactured commodities from Kalibangan ... (the inhabitants of the lower town) were indeed prosperous peasants enjoying all the amenities of the day. An agricultural field with criss-cross furrow marks found associated with the pre-Harappan levels at Kalibangan shows that even from that early times people had taken steps to augment production by growing two kinds of crops simultaneously, in the same field. Besides agriculture, various craftsmanships, trade and commerce were their other occupations, as clearly evidenced by the kinds of finds from these houses ... metallic objects, seals, weights, etc. (Lal, 59-61)

That the inhabitants of Kalibangan had large hoards of weapons is also borne out by archaeological evidence:

> The richness of copper artefacts at Kalibangan is all the more evident in the form of about 1200 copper objects from the Harappan levels. They include arrow-heads, chisels, spear-heads, celts, knives, axes, drills, daggers, etc. (Lal, 160)

It is clear that Kalibangan had a developed armoury as described in the *Ramayan.*

Although rice has not been reported yet from Kalibangan, both wheat and barley have been found. At Lothal and Rangpur rice husks and spikelets were found embedded in clay and pottery. (Allchin, 191) Since Lothal is located far south and Rangpur is located far north, we may presume that rice was known to Kalibangan also.

The ground water around Kalibangan is brackish today. This runs contrary to the description of sweet water given in the *Ramayan.* The first thing to note in this context is that the rainfall in the Indus valley during its heyday was much more than at present. From the study of vegetation in various periods, archaeologists have concluded that during the period 3000-1800 BC the annual average rainfall was probably at least 50 cm more than the present rainfall in the arid belt. (Lal, 462) This higher rainfall may have meant greater percolation of upper ground water and the same may have been sweet at that time. It is noteworthy that remains of a well have been located at Kalibangan. Obviously the water at that time must have been sweet; otherwise a well would not have been dug right in the middle of the town. It would be clear that the description of Ayodhya as given in the *Ramayan* fits Kalibangan reasonably well.

Lanka

In order to identify Lanka first we have to consider various references giving description of its environs:

> After crossing the sea, at the end of 100 *yojanas,* (Sri Hanuman) saw a green mountain range. He saw the island named Lanka decorated with many types of trees. Like the northern bank, there was a mountain on the southern bank also. He saw the sea, countries located on the seashore and the river mouths. (*Sundara Kanda,* 1.203)
>
> (Lanka) is located on the south bank of the sea spread out for a long distance. There is no route for the boats to reach there because it is not possible to keep track of the destination in the sea.
>
> (Starting from Kishkinda) Sri Ram along with Sugriv and Lakshman soon reached the forest on the seashore. On reaching that vast *bank of Sindhu,* Sri Ram said, "Sugriv, now we have reached the seashore, now ahead is the sea of which the other side is not visible." (*Yuddha Kanda,* 3.2, 4.95-98)

On the basis of above, the following facts stand out regarding the environs of Lanka: (i) it is located on south bank of the sea of 100 *yojanas*; (ii) there are mountains on both shores of the sea; (iii) it is an island; (iv) the north sea shore is referred as '*Sindhu-tata*'; (v) the sea water around it was salty; (vi) it was 10 *yojana* wide and 20 *yojana* long (*Yudha Kanda* 49.20); and (vii) it was very rich from the earliest times and is described as the abode of *Kuber,* the Lord of Wealth. (*Sundara Kanda,* 2.24)

The site of Mohanjo-daro seems to fulfill the descriptions of Lanka given above:

(i) The flood plains of the Indus around Mohanjo-daro during the last 7000 years show that the flood plains extended to many kilometres north and west of Mohanjo-daro during those times. The 'sea' of 8 Kilometres (100 *yojanas*) may have been the flood waters north of Mohanjo-daro.

(ii) The reference to mountains on both sides of this 'sea' may have been a reference to the erosion of the silt around Mohanjo-daro by the Indus leaving almost vertical banks. It has been reported that the earliest civilisation at Mohanjo-daro was established at a relatively low level of 31m msl. Then silting occurred at a rapid pace and as the level of the silt rose, those people kept building newer structures on the debris of the old upto 27m height such that the uppermost layer of Mohanjo-daro habitation is built at 58m msl. Then out of this silt, much was eroded leaving the city on a mound about 19m high. (Lal, 460) This mound on both sides of the flood plains may have been referred to as the mountain on both sides of the sea.

(iii) The flood waters of the Indus were spread on all four sides of Mohanjo-daro; hence it was an island.

(iv) The reference to Ram having reached the *Sindhutata* may obviously have been a reference to the Sindhu river, also referred to as a 'sea' because of its vastness being comparable to the ocean. Similar references to the sea by the name of 'Sindhu' are found in *Aranya Kanda* (35 11, 13) and *Yuddha Kanda* (21.31).

(v) There is a clear reference to the sea around Lanka having had salty waters. At only about 125 km south of Mohanjo daro, archaeologists have noted "a change from predominantly marine snails to predominantly fresh water species". (Lal, 459) Amri is about 400 km from the present limits of the Arabian Sea. Clearly there must have occurred some peculiar geological activity which may have led to the Indus waters having become brackish. This brackishness may have been referred to as the '*khara*', of the Lanka waters.

(vi) Mohanjo-daro's spread at 10 x 20 *yojanas* would be about 800 × 1600 m, which is indeed the approximate measurement of the lower town of Mohanjo-daro. (Lal, 76)

(vii) The richness of Mohanjo-daro is well established by archaeologists:

> Lothal, Chanu-daro and Harappa were some of the major industrial towns of the Harapans. Mohanjo-daro may not fall in this category although it has been the richest town of the Harappans in every sense of the term (Lal, 118)

The environs of Lanka are, therefore, in general in conformity with those of Mohanjo-daro.

Let us now turn to the structure of Lanka:

> There is a high parapet of gold around that city There are lines of houses built on that parapet That city was decorated with gates as high as the clouds That city had broad roads built separately
>
> There was a temple with hundred pillars which appeared like a mountain peak That city was full of strange metals and many gardens enhanced its beauty
>
> Like the sky full of monsoon clouds, Lanka was full of houses and transports That city was decorated with various strange metals Rakshasas of different forms lived there Ram and Lakshman saw that prosperous city of Ravan full of all desirable things Ram was astonished to see that heavenly city densely built with huge palaces (*Yuddha Kanda*, 3 11, 39 20-28, 19 22-21, *Sundra Kanda*, 2 50)

Like Lanka, Mohanjo-daro also had a parapet with gates:

> Two of the rectangular bastions of the south-eastern corner seem originally to have flanked a postern gate which was subsequently blocked and replaced by a platform with a parapet

Likewise a main street has been found at Mohanjo-daro:

> by the central street one can reach the heart of the city from the western gate and this central street seems to have been the chief entrance to the city through a north-west gate (Lal, 65)

Remains of what appears to have been a temple have also been found:

> One building in the lower city of Mohanjo-daro which comprised a monumental entrance and double stairway, leading to a raised platform on which was found one of the rare stone sculptures of a seated figure . may be identified as a temple (Allchin, 180)

The houses at Mohanjo-daro had courtyards which may have been described as the many gardens of Lanka.

> the ground plan of this complex is characterised by a series of so-called 'courtyards' (larger compartments of unknown function which may or may not, have been covered over) generally enclosed by a single rows of smaller compartments (Lal, 81)

Archaeologists have found that the houses of Mohanjo-daro had more than one story, private wells, courtyards and bathrooms. the larger dwellings consist of

> several dozen rooms and several courtyards Nearly all the larger houses had private wells. In many cases brick stairways led upto what must have been upper storeys or flat roofs In some cases there is evidence of bathrooms on the first floor (Allchin, 177)

There is much evidence of a thriving economy at Mohanjo-daro:

> The lower town must also have contained a wide range of shops and craft workshops Among these, potter's kilns, dyer's vats, metal worker's, shell-ornament maker's and bead maker's shops have been recognised (Allchin, 179)

The 'astonishment' of Sri Ram on seeing Lanka indicates that the grandeur of Lanka was extraordinary in comparison with the other cities of that time. This is well established by the fact that Mohanjo-daro is bigger than Kalibangan many times over. Therefore, Mohanjo-daro seems to fit the descriptions of Lanka as given in the *Ramayan*.

Sarayu

Before trying to identify the ancient rivers around Ayodhya we may outline the general topography of the area during the *Ramayan* period. The present Ghaggar river emerges near Ropar and flows via Patiala, Sirsa and Kalibangan to Suratgarh and goes on westward. At present the river becomes dry before reaching the Pakistan border near Anupgarh. However, its dry bed has been located to extend westward for some more distance. Beyond that it may have either joined the Indus or flowed separately to the Arabian Sea on an eastern course parallel to it. There is a second ancient river emanating east of Ambala. This river is now dry. It used to flow via Jind and Hissar to meet the Ghaggar near Suratgarh. This has been named as Channel-Y1 by the archaeologists. There is a third river which emanates further east of Ambala and flows south-east of Jind and Hissar and is traceable only upto Mitathal. This river is named as Channel-Y2 by the archaeologists. It is our proposal that these three rivers were the ancient Sarayu, Ganga and

Yamuna respectively.

We may now turn to the descriptions of various travels given in the *Ramayan* for the corroboration of the identifications of these rivers. When Sri Ram is sent with Rishi Viswamitra by King Dasarath, they leave the banks of the Sarayu near Ayodhya in the morning and reach the confluence of Sarayu and Ganga by the evening. (*Bal Kanda*, 23.5, 24.10) At a distance of about 30 km from Kalibangan near Suratgarh the Ghaggar is joined by Channel-Y1, the ancient Ganga. This distance of 30 km can be traversed in one day easily and appears to have been the route taken by Sri Ram and Viswamitra.

Later when Sri Ram is expelled from Ayodhya, he traverses this same route to the Ganga-Sarayu confluence. At that time he is said to have crossed the rivers Tamasa, Vedasruti, Gomati and Syandika on the way. (*Ayodhya Kanda*, 46.28, 49.10-12) However, these rivers are crossed on the chariot itself. Hence, it appears that they may have been seasonal rainfed rivers which were dry at the time of Sri Ram's expulsion from Ayodhya.

Channel-Y1, or the Ganga, was a mighty river in its heyday and is upto 4 km broad at places such as Hissar. During Sri Ram's time this may have been a perennial river because a well-established system of boats and rafts to cross it has been described in the *Ramayan*. When Bharat follows Sri Ram to Chitrakut, a flotilla of 500 boats carries his army across. The chariots are also loaded on to larger vessels for the crossing:

> On the orders of Guha, all the sailors soon got up and brought 500 boats from all directions.
>
> In addition there were some boats famous by the name of Swastika. These were recognised by the Swastika sign decorated upon them. There were huge sails on them from which large bells had been hung. All those boats were very strong.
>
> Guha himself brought a boat in which white carpets were spread out. The priests, Bharat and the queens boarded that boat. Carts and other trade goods were loaded on separate boats.
>
> Many men sat on the boats and many sat on rafts made of bamboos.
>
> In this way that army crossed the Ganga with the help of the boatsmen. (*Ayodhya Kanda*, 79.10-20)

Sri Ram started from the Ganga-Sarayu confluence in the morning and reached the Ganga-Yamuna confluence in the evening covering the distance on foot. (*Ayodhya Kanda*, 54.8) Taking the distance covered during a day on foot to be about 20-30 km, we may conclude that the Yamuna joined the Ganga at about this distance away from Suratgarh. Thus we may surmise that Channel-Y2 joined the Ghaggar at about this distance from Suratgarh.

It seems that at that time the flow of Channel-Y2 had already turned eastward to the Bay of Bengal and there was a break in its waters between Mitathal and the Ghaggar confluence. This conclusion is based upon some of the episodes mentioned in the *Ramayan*. When Sri Ram and Lakshman reached the banks of the Yamuna, they made a raft of dry bamboos and crossed the Yamuna upon it. (*Ayodhya Kanda*, 55.14) However, when Bharat reached the Yamuna, he did not cross it by boat; instead he appears to have taken a different route circuiting around the dead waters of the Yamuna:

> Bharadwaj Muni said, "At 10 *kosa* distance from here there is Chitrakut Hill in the middle of the forests. River Mandakini flows on the northern edge of that forest. You will see Sri Ram's hut between that river and the hill. Commander, you first take your army full of horses and elephants on the path running on the south banks of the Yamuna. Soon you will find two paths. You take the left path going towards the south and soon you will see Sri Ram."
>
> That huge army *moved ahead on the other side of the Ganga*, crossing the hills and the forests full of deer and birds along the banks of the rivers. After covering a long distance, when Bharat's army had gotten very tired, then Bharat said, "It appears that this is the Chitrakut Hill."
> (*Ayodhya Kanda*, 92.10-13, 39; 93.6-8)

Clearly there is no reference to Bharat's army having had to cross the Yamuna. On the contrary there is reference to the army getting 'very' tired traversing the other side of the Ganga. This indicates that for Sri Ram it was convenient to make a raft and cross the dead waters of Channel-Y2 rather than take a long circuitous route; but for Bharat's army the land route around the dead waters was more practical.

There are two further indirect references in the *Ramayan* to the change in the flow of the Yamuna. At one place the Yamuna waters are said to flow in the reverse direction:

> Bharadwaj Mahamuni said, "You brothers proceed towards the Yamuna from the confluence of Ganga and Yamuna where Ganga flows westward. *The Yamuna has turned backwards there* due to the velocity of waters of the Ganga." (*Ayodhya Kanda*, 55.4-5)

The backward turning of the waters of the Yamuna appears possible only if there was no flow from upstream. Also we must note the reference to the westward flow of the Ganga mentioned above which is in conformity with the flow of Channel-Y1.

Elsewhere, Kumbhakarna laments the loss of the waters of the Yamuna:

> When Yamuna wanted to descend upon the earth then only she had filled the tanks of the Yamunotri mountains. (After descending, when her waters have flowed into the sea and become quiet then she cannot refill those tanks.)
> (*Yuddha Kanda*, 12.28)

The wish that the Yamuna waters may return is expressed quite clearly. The importance of the Yamuna waters lay in the fact that the level of Indus would go up significantly if it flowed westward. That would make Indus navigable. This supports the view that the Yamuna had started flowing eastward to the Bay of Bengal during Sri Ram's time; hence Kumbhakarna's lamentation.

Archaeological studies have shown that the Yamuna has changed its course many times between the westward and eastward flow.

> Basing his arguments on calculations for the rates of sedimentation, location of archaeological sites of early cultures in the Ghaggar valley, and the thickness of deposits at these sites, Raikes has postulated alternate captures of the channel by the Indus and the Ganga systems. Raikes has correlated these episodes with archaeological cultures in the following manner:

1. Westward diversion to Indus	2500-1750 BC
2. Eastward diversion to Ganga	1750-1100 BC
3. Westward diversion to Indus	1100-500 BC
4. Eastward diversion to Ganga	500-100 BC
5. Westward diversion to Indus	100 BC-500 AD
6. Eastward diversion to Ganga	AD 500+. (Lal, 180)

The vacillation of the Channel-Y2 waters is, therefore, well-established. We must particularly note the shift from west to east at about 1750 BC. The shift may have occurred around the time of Sri Ram and has left its impression upon the *Ramayan*.

Kishkinda

The most significant reference which gives away the location of Kishkinda comes while Sugriv is sending his soldiers in the four directions in search of Sita. While describing the eastern direction among others, the river Sindhu is mentioned. (*Kishkinda Kanda*, 40.20) This would place Kishkinda to the west of Sindhu. And if our identification of Mohanjo-daro as Lanka is correct, then Kishkinda has to be north of Mohanjo-daro. Thus, we may postulate that Kishkinda may have been the terai of Bugti on the western banks of the Indus. Now, we may read the geography of the four directions as narrated by Sugriv with Bugti terai as the centre:

> (East:) Search for the quarters of Sita and Ravan on the banks of Bhagirathi Ganga, beautiful Sarayu, Kaushiki, Kalindnandani Yamuna, Mount Yamun, River Saraswati, *Sindhu*, Sonbhadra of quiet waters, Mahi and Kalmahi and other rivers and the hills and forests near them.
>
> (South:) Across the (Southern) sea there is an island 100 *yojana* broad. That is the abode of Ravan. Beyond Lanka, in the 100 *yojana* broad sea, there is a mountain named Rishpitak. Beyond that you will find Suryavan, Vaidyut, Kunjara and Rishabha mountains located in the middle of the sea.
>
> (West:) In the western direction generally there are deserts high cold peaks and difficult terrains At *the junction of the Sindhu river and the sea* there is a mountain named Somagiri. Beyond that you will see Paryatra, Vajranabha, Chaitravan, Varaha, Meghagiri and Meru mountains amidst the sea
>
> (North:) After searching in various cities and countries look in the Himalayas. Then go to Mountains named Kala, Sudarshan, Devasakhu, Kailasa, Kaunchangiri and Mainak. Then you will reach Shailoda river. Thereafter you will find Mount Somagiri in the middle of the northern sea. You cannot go farther and I know nothing of the lands beyond Somagiri. (*Kishkinda Kanda*, 11-13)

The picture of the world as seen from Kishkinda has the river valleys in the east, the sea in the south, deserts and mountains in the west and cities followed by mountains in the north. The rivers Ghaggar and Luni with their tributaries are to the east; Mohanjo-daro and the Indus floodplains are to the south, the Baluchistan mountains are to the west and the northern Indus civilisation followed by the Himalaya mountains are to the north of Bugti in conformity with the descriptions given in the *Ramayan*. Most noteworthy is that while Sindhu is said to flow to the east of Kishkinda yet, it is supposed to join the sea to the west of Kishkinda. Indeed, Indus flows to the east of Bugti and joins the sea south-west of Bugti.

The Bridge

The crossing of the salt sea by building a bridge constitutes one of the most heroic deeds of Sri Ram. If Lanka was Mohanjo-daro then where was the bridge built? Travelling south from Bugti on the western banks of the Indus, Sri Hanuman and Sri Ram would have first confronted these broad floodwaters. For Sri Hanuman, travelling alone, the only recourse was to swim across. Let us look at the description of Hanuman's crossing of the sea in this background:

> (Sri Hanuman) contracted his limbs such that they came within the waist and he joined his feet. Then he contracted his neck and both hands. He looked upward to take a look at his long route and looking upwards he held his breath. Then he jumped upwards.
>
> Sri Hanuman's body was moving above the sea and his shadow appeared to be drowned in the sea. In this way he appeared like a boat in the sea of which the upper portion was in the air and the lower portion was touching the sea water In whichever part of the sea he went there arose huge waves due to the speed of his limbs. *He moved ahead breaking the waves with his breast*. (*Sundara Kanda*, 1.67-69)

While Sri Hanuman could swim across, Sri Ram had a much more difficult problem as he had to take a whole army across those waters. The strategy adopted by Sri Ram appears to have been as follows: First, he shot long arrows into the sea to find out where the waters were shallow. Next, two of his swimmers swam across the deep waters and stood on the submerged ground in the shallow waters holding a thread to give correct indication of the direction. The soldiers uprooted trees and threw them into the waters along that thread. They tied stones to the trees as anchors to prevent that floating away, Assisted by these floating trees his army swam across the deep on to the shallow waters of Lanka:

> Then Sri Ram became angry on the sea. He strung his bow and shot fearful arrows into the sea. Those great, fast and best of the arrows penetrated the sea waters. Out of fear, *the sea gave away its depth to Sri Ram*. Then the Vanars entered the huge forests and broke the mountain tops and trees and pulled them to the sea. They started filling the sea with various trees. The Vanars brought stones as big as elephants to the seashore with the help of machines. The sea water would jump out of the sea due to the throwing of the stones Other Vanars were holding a thread 100 *yojana* long.
>
> In this way Vishwakarma's son Nala built a 100 *yojana* long bridge in the sea.
>
> Then Sugriv said to Sri Ram, please climb upon the shoulders of Hanuman and Lakshman may climb on the back of Angad because this ocean is very large and broad. In this way Sri Ram, Lakshman and Sugriv led the army. Other Vanars went in the middle and sides of the army. Many would jump into the sea and would swim. Others would go along the bridge route. (*Yuddha Kanda*, 21.13, 26; 22.50, 51-62, 73, 81-85)

There are two other references to the shallow and broad waters of the salt sea. When Hanuman was swimming towards Lanka, the sea said to Mainak mountain hid within itself:

> Indra has established you here as a perimeter to obstruct the exit route of the Patal based Asuras. They want to

> come up again from the Patal, therefore, you are standing here at the gates of the limitless Patal (*Sundara Kanda,* 1 92-93)

This appears to be a reference to a ridge submerged within the waters around Lanka which prevented the ocean living seafarers from taking their boats upcountry.

The second reference arises when Vibhishan leaves Ravan to join Sri Ram. The main difficulty around Lanka seems to have been navigational. It was apparently difficult to keep the coordinates and to avoid running aground:

> Lanka is located on the southern bank of the sea spread afar There is no route to go there by a boat because it is not possible to keep track of the destination within it (*Yuddha Kanda,* 3 21)

Despite such navigational difficulties, Vibhishan crossed the waters easily.

> Having spoken so to Ravan, his younger brother Vibhishan reached the place where Sri Ram was camping *within two moments.*
> Vibhishan stood still in the *akash* on the northern banks of the seashore
> Then Sri Ram came forward to meet Vibhishan.
> Then Vibhishan looked toward the earth with an intent to climb down He came down happily from the *akash* to the earth (*Yuddha Kanda,* 17.1,10, 18 39, 19.1-2)

This crossing of the sea by Vibhishan was possible because he knew how to navigate a small boat in that expanse.

Pushpak

The word '*viman*' is used for Pushpak in the *Ramayan.* '*Viman*', according to Bhargawa's dictionary, means "a celestial car moving in the air, an aeroplane, a balloon, a bier, a chariot, a carriage, a horse". It is clear that '*viman*', in a larger sense, means a conveyance including land based vehicles. Now the question is whether Pushpak was a ship or it was an aeroplane of some sort. Pushpak is described as follows.

> Each part of the Viman was gilt with gold. There were secret rooms here and there *It was decorated with white and yellow flags and masts There were bridges in it* decorated with golden lotuses. It was full of *strings of small bells* There were windows of pearls and jewels. Bells were tied on all sides from which sweet music used to come That Viman was as high as mount Meru and had big rooms decorated with silver and pearls. There were thrones made of sapphire in it and expensive beds were spread out on them. (*Yuddha Kanda,* 121 24-28)

The descriptions of rooms, flags, masts, bridges and bells are in conformity with the construction of large boats plying on the rivers even today.

The people of Mohanjo-daro were quite familiar with boats. A terracota amulet depicting a boat has been discovered at Mohanjo-daro. A terracota model of a ship, with a stick-impressed socket for the mast and eyeholes for fixing rigging has been found at Lothal near Ahmedabad, where also a tank which appears to have been a dockyard has been found. (Allchin, 175,188) Thus it is clear that the peoples of the Indus civilisation were quite familiar with the building of the ships and this substantiates that the Pushpak may have been a ship. The peculiar speciality of Pushpak may have been its ability to navigate in shallow waters.

The return journey of Ram from Lanka to Ayodhya on the Pushpak may now be traced. While returning Sri Ram describes the places enroute to Sita in the following sequence (*Yuddha Kanda,* 123):

Ramayan Description	*Proposed Geographical Location*
Lanka	- Mohanjo-daro.
Kishkinda	- Northward along the Indus, the area to the west known as Bugti country.
Pampa	- Further north-east where Sri Ram crossed the Indus while making his downward journey.
Janasthan	- The abode of Marici, somewhere near Bahawalpur. Probably this is the place where the Ghaggar met the Indus. This would be a critical location to control maritime trade.
Godavari	- Perhaps a name of the Ghaggar near its confluence with the Indus, or may be some small river flowing into the Ghaggar.
Chitrakut	- The area south of the Ghaggar somewhere between Bahawalpur and Anupgarh.
Yamuna	- The confluence of Channel-Y2 with the Ghaggar between Anupgarh and Suratgarh.
Ganga	- The confluence of Channel-Y1 with the Ghaggar near Suratgarh.
Ayodhya	- Kalibangan on the Ghaggar .

All we wish to point out is that there does exist a water route from Mohanjo-daro to Kalibangan which may have been utilised by Sri Ram for his return journey on the Pushpak.

Conclusion

In order to appreciate the importance of Sri Ram's achievements it may be helpful to outline the general economic situation of his times. The Indus civilisation arose around 3000 BC. It was spread across Saurashtra and Sind in the south and Punjab and Rajasthan in the north. These two zones were connected by the Indus river. The Indus formed an artery at Mohanjo-daro with the Baluchistan mountains on the west and the Thar desert on the east. Thus, any king who could control this area could dominate the economy of the entire civilisation.

The Indus people were tradesmen. They used to export manufactured goods—beads, shells, cloth, jaggery, etc. not only to Saurashtra but also to Iraq and Egypt. In return they probably imported scarce metals such as tin and gold. This thriving economy was apparently divided between the seafarers-cum-tradesmen along the Indus and the manufacturers-agriculturists spread across Punjab and Rajasthan.

It is reported that the rainfall declined around 1800 BC. Thus the flow of waters in the Ghaggar, Channel-Y1 and Channel-Y2 would automatically decline. On top of it there were apparently some tectonic changes causing a shift of Yamuna waters from westward Indus to eastward Bay of Bengal. This would have two consequences. Firstly, Punjab and Rajasthan based agricultural communities like Ayodhya would have been under severe pressure to adjust to low rainfall. Secondly, the reduced flow in the Indus would mean navigational difficulties for the seafarers. These changes may have been the underpinnings of the conflict between the agriculturists and seafarers. In this background the great contribution of Sri Ram may have been to break this stranglehold of the seafarers on the agricultural communities of the north.

A question arises as to why the *Ramayan* itself claims to have been based in the Ganges valley? There is no malafide Common folklore has it that Ayodhya had been lost and was rediscovered by King Vikramaditya in the early part of the Christian era. The versions of the *Valmiki Ramayan* available to us also date from the Christian era. Now, in the Christian era if one tried to search for the last Ayodhya where would one look? The Indus civilisation, like Ayodhya, had been lost and was discovered only in the present century. Thus, in absence of the Indus history, King Vikramaditya did his best and identified Ayodhya in the Ganges valley. Had King Vikramaditya known of the Indus civilisation, he too may have reached a different conclusion. ■

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SHASTRI: Electoral Reforms

(Continued from page 7)

need to replace the system with a more suitable one. Several suggestions have been mooted in this regard Ways and means of discouraging Independents from entering the electoral contest have been put forward from time to time. Independents are considered largely responsible for the alleged "inflation" in numbers in the electoral contest The Election Commission has frequently drawn the attention of the government (in its Reports) to the fact that the 'undue multiplicity of candidates' is both 'undesirable and confusing' In its Report on the Third General Elections in India, 1962, the Commission emphatically stressed that if "a clear verdict is to be obtained (in a constituency) it is essential that the contest should be limited to a *few worthy candidates,* and light hearted participation by individuals who do not have any substantial electoral support must be checked". However the desirability of discouraging Independents from contesting needs to be viewed with caution as every citizen enjoys the fundamental right to offer himself/herself as a candidate in an election

The Tarkunde Committee in its report spoke of the possibility of adopting the 'Partial List System'. As per this system, only candidates securing more than 50 per cent of the votes polled are declared elected For those seats where no candidates secures 50 per cent of the votes polled, a different principle is followed. All seats not filled through direct election will be distributed among the various parties in such a manner that the total seats the parties secure in the concerned legislature are in proportion to the valid votes polled by them This would be done by declaring elected as many members from each party list (well before polling day each recognised party will be asked to submit a list of candidates in order of preference) as will result in the total strength of each party (directly elected + elected from the list) being roughly proportionate to the votes polled by the party However, the committee also acknowledged the weaknesses of the system and called for a widespread public debate for a consensus to emerge.

Recently, the Governor of Andhra Pradesh, Krishna Kant, has suggested that a system of negative voting should be introudced A negative vote provision, he believes, would be a legal channel for the expression of dissent. The negative vote suggestion may, at the most, only serve as a 'negative solution' to the problem and will in no way positively contribute to strengthening the electoral system.

An alternative suggestion that appears to be more meaningful and practical, is the system of second run-off or second ballot. Under the provisions of such a system, if no candidate secures more than 50 per cent of the votes polled in the first round of elections in a constituency, a second run-off is held between the top two contestants within a week. As a result the candidate who wins the election from the constituency secures a majority of the total votes polled. By adopting this system, the election process can safely permit any citizen who wishes to offer himself/herself as a candidate, to contest an election, (with the eligibility conditions as they presently exist continuing) without in any way having a detrimental or negative impact on the electoral system. Adopting the second run-off or second ballot system appears to be the most effective manner of overcoming the limitations that have been experienced in the working of the 'first-past-the-post' system in the last four decades. This system would permit only those who have clearly secured the mandate of the voters to enter the legislature Candidates would then have to take their election campaign more seriously and electoral victories would not merely be caused by dividing the opponents' votes or concentrating on securing the votes of one segment of the voters.

The second ballot system cannot be considered in isolation and its success would considerably depend upon the corresponding electoral reforms initiated in the other spheres. The second ballot system could form part of the comprehensive package of electoral reforms that the system today needs. ■

Total Literacy Campaign—II

Still an Unwritten Chapter in Indian History

LAKSHMIDHAR MISHRA

September 8 was the International Literacy Day. This article is being carried in two instalments to mark the occasion. The first part of the article appeared in Mainstream *(September 5, 1992).*

—Editor

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Why are people indifferent to literacy? Why is there so much of cynicism and scepticism towards literacy? Why is it that after so many silver-linings on the horizon, people are still indulging in endless debates and disputes on literacy: "Is it necessary? Is it desirable? Can literacy not wait? Can't the resources meant for literacy be diverted towards elementary education?" Such endless debates go on in the outside world to the total exclusion of millions of learners and volunteers participating in the literacy programmes with boundless enthusiasm and commitment.

It is quite natural that these and many other questions should agitate those who are actively engaged in conceptualisation, planning and actual implementation of the Mission at the national, State and district level as also at the grassroots. Before we squarely address ourselves to these questions, it may be interesting to understand some of the doubts, disputes, misgivings and reservations in somewhat greater detail so that we can also simultaneously counter them with all the force at our command, not so much with a view to silencing the critics, cynics and sceptics but to restore the primacy and centrality of literacy and to put the Mission and its objectives, strategy and methodology in a proper perspective.

To start with, both before and after the Mission was launched by the former Prime Minister, the late Rajiv Gandhi, questions were raised about the status of the Mission in a manner which is a sad reflection of our thinking and ethos. The Mission was being linked by many to the handiwork of a particular political party in power, even though the late Prime Minister had stated in so many clear and unambiguous words:

> This is not the Mission of any particular Ministry or Department or Agency; this is the concern of the whole nation. Literacy should be viewed by the people as important as drinking water and immunisation.

The author, a Joint Secretary in the Department of Education under the Union Ministry of Human Resource Development, is the Director-General of the National Literacy Mission. The views expressed in this paper are entirely those of the author and not those of the Ministry.

After sometime when the Adviser to the PM on Technology Missions started playing the role of a nodal institution to intensively monitor and coordinate the activities in all the National Technology Missions, similar confusing and disturbing questions continued to be raised characterising the Mission as the handiwork of an individual. It was repeatedly clarified that a national mission cannot be the handiwork of a particular individual or even groups of individuals. A mission is a national endeavour and time-bound search for a new identity of literacy, a new expression of the cultural energy and creativity of the people and the outcome of accumulated research and wisdom and, therefore, cannot be equated with just one individual or one political party or one political personality.

When the Total Literacy Campaign (TLC) proposal was received from Ernakulam, this was straightaway dismissed as an attempt to carry coal to Newcastle. It was clarified that even though the rate of literacy in Ernakulam was high (as high as 77 per cent, according to the 1981 Census), the Ernakulam model, if successful, could have a very good spin-off effect inasmuch as it would inspire and motivate several other districts that total literacy is not something which is utopian, but something which is possible and achievable. After the Ernakulam experiment was successfully concluded, it started acting as a powerful stimulant for several other districts, both in the North as well as in the South. In other words, one K.R. Rajan could nucleate many potential Rajans who came forward to assume the leadership for similar experiments with lot of enthusiasm and self-confidence that they can also do it as well as Rajan. The fact that all districts are not uniformly placed and endowed and that there is a great deal of geographical, topographical, socio-economic and cultural diversity obtaining in different regions, in different districts and even within the same district, did not undermine their enthusiasm to go ahead with the idea of the TLC.

It is true that it was comparatively easier to launch the campaign experiment in Ernakulam than in other districts but this, by itself, did not imply exclusion of other districts nor did it imply exclusion of the poor, the deprived and the disadvantaged people of less endowed regions. All that was simply intended was (a) the concept of total literacy in a campaign mode *treating the district as a unit* was comparatively new; (b) a countrywide awareness of all the parameters of success of a campaign cannot be straightaway generated; and (c) we should try it out, therefore, in an area where it was likely to succeed better than elsewhere. By now, it is a matter of history that Ernakulam did succeed admirably well and in the wake of that success, TLCs for the whole State of Kerala, for the UT of Pondicherry, Goa and several districts of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Orissa, Assam, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan were taken up in quick succession. All of them cannot be said to be the exact replication of the Ernakulam model even though they have derived lot of inspiration and strength from the latter adapting the essence of the Ernakulam experiment profitably to their advantage.

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WHAT exactly is the essence of that experiment? It means that despite social heterogeneity, caste and stratification factor and despite numerous divisive and disruptive forces, there are a number of good, well-meaning, conscientious and progressive minded people in society who can be mobilised and whose support can be harnessed for literacy work. It means that like-minded people can come together, think together, plan together and act together for a common cause like literacy. It also means that notwithstanding the euphoria of the stock market, notwithstanding the call of the God of Mammon and numerous corrupting mercenery forces obtaining in society, there are still people who have retained the spark of altruism, the impulse of voluntarism and who are willing to work for others without any expectation of award or reward or incentive as teachers, as trainers, as evaluators and as environment builders. They are willing to part with a portion of their energy, ingenuity and skill in favour of those who do not have them, who have been deprived of them for no fault of theirs and yet who are in need of the same. Once this innate goodness in human beings is recognised and the basic premise established that voluntary work for literacy is possible and feasible with the help of a number of good samaritans, it is not difficult to build a super-structure on the sub-structure.

This super-structure, however, need not be a skyscrapper; it needs to be a structure which is simple, inexpensive, with few layers, credible and accountable, open and accessible to all The importance of the structure, however, remains inasmuch as a campaign for total literacy is essentially a short-duration endeavour and if the results are to be achieved in a process which is extremely difficult and complex, the entire effort has to be planned, coordinated, systematic and well-structured. There must be close monitoring, supervision and coordination so that we get to know that the right things are happening at the right time in the right manner and that if anything has gone wrong, the correctives need to be applied instantaneously so that there can be no let up or slip-off. It also means that the results sought to be achieved are not only deliverable but also measurable in clear, precise and scientific terms.

After the new approach, that is, the TLC, started gathering momentum, every increase in the number of TLC districts was accompanied by a near increase in the number of cynics and sceptics. The first attack came from those who are the protagonists of elementary education. Their guns were targeted against so much of concentrated attention to adult literacy, to the exclusion of elementary education in the formal system. Some of them were undoubtedly well-meaning and had years of track record of dedicated service in the field of basic education. In a sense, therefore, they were justified in discouraging efforts to sweep the floor when the tap was on. Some of their attacks were also equally ill-conceived and ill-designed. Universalisation of elementary education, non-formal education for non-school goers and school dropouts in the 9-14 age-group and adult literacy are inextricably intertwined; one is as important as the other. They are, as a matter of fact, mutually supportive and inter-dependent programmes, one supporting and reinforcing the other. This nexus has been recognised in reports of successive Education Commissions, the Kothari Review Committee on Adult Education (1980), the NPE Review Committee headed by Acharya Ramamurthi, the NPE Review Committee headed by Janardan Reddy, the NPE (1986) as modified in 1992 and the POA (1986) as modified in 1992 and is otherwise known as the 'dual track' approach.

In the districts where the TLCs are being taken up, there has been a planned and systematic effort to carry children in the 9-14 age-group alongwith adults in the first phase of the campaign while creating better conditions in the formal school system for enrolment of children in the 5-8 age-group. In a majority of the TLC districts, there is a realisation that children who are enrolled in the first phase of the campaign alongwith adults would be in need of a more stringent and systematic non-formal education spanning over a period of one and a half years in the minimum to reach minimum levels of literacy. This consciousness is reflected in the Action Plan for the TLC as also in the actual implementation at the basic literacy and post-literacy stages in several districts and, therefore, the criticism levelled against the TLC that ignores and belittles the early childhood and elementary education with over-riding preference for adult education is rather unfair and unfounded.

In our scheme of development, the family is treated as the lowest unit and a family comprises of parents, adolescents and children. There can be three types of situations in a family in relation to literacy. In the first category both parents, adolescents and children are illiterate. In such a situation no worthwhile interaction can take place amongst the family members. In the second category, the parents are illiterate, but the children are literate. The latter in such a situation cannot communicate to the former on the same wavelength. In the third category, the parents may be literate but due to peculiar circumstances the children may have been deprived of the access to educational opportunity. Such a situation may be more an exception than the rule. In the dual track approach which we have adopted for ourselves in the National Policy of Education and the Programme of Action formulated thereunder, what we are saying is that parental illiteracy and child illiteracy go together and no learning society can be created in any household by sending children to school while parents remain illiterate or by imparting functional literacy to adult parents and not sending children to school. Creation of a learning society is essentially the outcome of constant inter-activity between parents and children which ensures learning by sharing and, therefore, there is no question of permitting one at the cost of the other or to the exclusion of the other, but promoting both together with the same urgency, same seriousness, same emphasis and same thrust. If as a result of the cultural campaign, as an integral part of the campaign for total literacy, parental demand for enrolment and retention of the children in the formal school system has been generated, the demand has to be met regardless of the financial implications, otherwise the entire experiment will be counter-productive and the gap between parental illiteracy and child illiteracy will get widened.

The Collector and District Magistrate in most of the TLC districts occupies a pivotal position. As chairperson of the Zilla Saksharata Samiti, he/she acts as the principal mobiliser and coordinator of the campaign and provides the leadership and overall direction to the pace, tempo and rythm of the campaign. This is quite natural as every campaign is a short duration affair where both the process and outcome are important and where it is imperative to unite and coordinate a number of defused and uncoordinated elements and forces who would otherwise tend to act at cross-purposes. Who else is better placed to unite and coordinate these inchoate and uncoordinated elements than the head of the district administration? We are, however, not looking at the Collector and DM in a TLC as one who will be the regulator of a mechanism or the controller of the destiny of others but as one who will be the first amongst the equals, who will be able to carry a number of discordant elements and make them think together, plan together and act together so that there is some symmetry and harmony in an otherwise highly heterogeneous society. This calls for lot of modesty and humility, lot of respect for the dignity and equality of all beings, lot of catholicity and tolerance. It may not be uniformly forthcoming from all district Collectors but wherever these characteristics are present, they will contribute most towards the success of the campaign and where the style of functioning is highly personalised, arbitrary and authoritarian , it is bound to be counter-productive.

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CRITICISMS have been levelled that Collectors and DMs are the principal instruments of maintenance of law and order, peace and tranquility; they also constitute the focal point of coordination of all development efforts in a district. Excessive preoccupation of the Collector and DM with the total literacy efforts in a district could result in a situation where other components of development may get sidelined or neglected and, therefore, according to them, it is doubtful whether such over-riding priority to literacy promotion efforts on the part of the Collector and DM augurs well for the district. Such criticisms are as unfair and unfounded as they are in the case of earlier ones. In whatever manner we may look at it, literacy creates motivation and awareness which result in acquisition of skills necessary for development. Literacy also creates conditions for acquisition of a critical consciousness of the ironies and contradictions of the society in which we live. Literacy provides certain competencies to the youth required for productive participation in the affairs of the family, of the society and the larger affairs of the nation. Access to literacy stimulates the desire for training in diverse skills and motivates the poor and the deprived to intensify their efforts to break-out of the poverty cycle to adopt more effective modes of production and distribution. Access to literacy heightens political awareness and would enable people to participate more effectively in civic affairs and affairs of the body politic—both local and national. It would promote democratisation of the working of the government and the NGOs, local self-governing bodies, voluntary agencies and would improve the quality and content of conducting the entire democratic process through Parliament, Legislative Assemblies, Corporations, Municipalities, Notified Area Councils, Panchayats, etc. More than anything else, access to literacy would also ensure access to the development parameters such as access to credit, access to seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, access to water both for irrigation purposes as well as drinking, and access to a world of information of direct interest and relevance to the learners (health, family welfare, immunisation, nutrition, maternity protection, child care, small family norm, etc.).

Viewed in this perspective, literacy becomes the key to the entire development effort, not merely by expanding the flow of information but by way of promoting awareness, empowerment and eventually leading to formation of organisation of the unorganised and strengthening of the entire collective bargaining process. It is important that access to information in matters of public policy in the areas of age of marriage, age of employment, prohibition, untouchability, dowry, etc. is viewed as important as access to acquisition of vocational skills. Literacy being an important tool of acquisition in both, it assumes paramount importance for all development departments and development functionaries. They need to regard literacy as their own programme and as the key to the success of their porgrammes. Attention to literacy promotion efforts cannot, therefore, be wished away in the name of maintenance of law and order, peace and tranquility nor in the name of departmentalism. There have been two principal banes of our entire development effort—(a) targetitis, that is, fixing artificial targets in terms of number and making the entire planning process revolve round the game of numbers; and (b) viewing development in terms of water-tight compartments such as health, hygiene, sanitation, agriculture, animal husbandry, veterinary, etc. Since a human being is one and indivisible, we cannot afford to divide a human being in the name of different development departments and functionaries which will not only amount to compartmentalisation but dissection of a living being. As a matter of fact, literacy can be an important uniting factor to forge a practical and useful link between different development departments and human beings who are the beneficiaries as well as participants of the entire development process.

Several doubts have been raised in the past and even now that literacy can ill-afford to level or unite divergent elements and forces in a society which is hierarchical, stratified and caste-based. It has also been observed that illiteracy is synonymous with poverty, deprivation and economic backwardness while literacy is synonymous with affluence, rank and status in society. Nothing can be farther from the truth. It is true that those who are high up in society generally come from the landed aristocracy and by virtue of their power and position and capacity to garner resources, they may look down upon the need for and relevance of literacy as an important entry point for the poor, the deprived and the disadvantaged. They may even dissociate themselves from literacy promotion effort and demonstrate their hostility to it. While launching a campaign for total literacy, one cannot wish away the harsh socio-economic realities obtaining in an inequitable system surrounded by all-pervasive poverty and deprivation. The campaign may not put an end to the state of landlessness or assetlessness or bondage. The campaign can, however, unleash several good, positive and progressive elements of the society and bring them together to work for literacy as a movement of the people and, in that process, may appeal to their good conscience that they owe in no uncertain terms an obligation to those who are less fortunate but whose sacrifice has in no small measure contributed to the total evolution, advancement and growth of the society.

It may so happen that as a result of social churning, which may be caused by the cultural campaign for literacy, there may be an attitudinal change even in the minds of those who are otherwise averse or indifferent to literacy. Such a process may be a slow and gradual one but judging by the trend of development taking place in some of the TLC districts, it is quite likely that the campaign could act as a powerful tool to induce certain changes which are healthy and in the larger social interest. Undoubtedly, all such efforts will have to be backed-up by simultaneous measures for land reforms, for asset distribution and reduction of economic disparity and for creation of certain outlets which will promote democratic participation of all sections of the society.

This brings to our mind certain mistaken notions related to people's empowerment. This is an important concept which has been laid down in the NLM document and is an object to be cherished and achieved through total literacy efforts. Empowerment of the people basically means that people are enabled to understand and internalise the causes and factors of social discrimination and economic deprivation; they are also enabled to perceive their strength and weaknesses vis-a-vis the strength and weaknesses of the diverse elements of the society which surround their day-to-day lives. Efforts which go to promote empowerment of the people cannot, therefore, be treated as subversive or sign of belligerence. If that is so, all that is being done in the NLM will have to be negatived or given a go-bye.

People's empowerment becomes all the more important in the context of women, who have been for successive generations sidelined or marginalised and who remain at the mercy of the menfolk despite their enormous capability for hard work, ingenuity and their contribution to the development of the family, the community and the nation as a whole. The moment they are enabled to think, reflect, critically analyse and question the aura of false consciousness surrounding their lives, it will unfold vistas of a new vision for them. Once they are aroused and awakened and perceive the importance of organisation, they will come together and constitute a cohesive force which will be a formidable one. This unity and solidarity will make possible the liberation of the womenfolk from the numerous fads, taboos and diehard conservative ideas which have confined their lives to a cocoon-like existence and reduced them to commodities. This way of conscientising women to organise themselves has been attempted through the WDP in Rajasthan and is being tried out, though selectively, through Mahila Samakhya, a Dutch assisted project in 10 districts of UP, Karnataka and Gujarat with many positive fall-outs.

VI

HAVING made an attempt to respond to some of the oft-repeated criticisms or rather misgivings about the NLM and the new campaign approach for total literacy, it will be appropriate now to turn our attention to the latest status of the Mission and share with the readers some of the ground level achievements.

The most important strength of the campaign lies in the fact that it has provided an ambience for political parties, representatives of the people and cross-sections of the society to come together, plan and work together in a common direction despite internal contradictions or ideological differences. The campaign has also proved that learners, despite age and disability, despite social and cultural heterogeneity, despite caste, class and gender divide, can learn and today nearly 55 million learners are learning with the help of about five million volunteers with a lot of zest and self-confidence. They can see for themselves the pace and progress of learning. They can retain and apply the benefits of learning to real life situations.

It is a most satisfying experience to see people belonging to multiple strata of the society—such as small and marginal farmers, landless agricultural labourers, sharecroppers, rural artisans, fishermen and women, beedi workers, leather workers, tribal collectors of minor forest produce—are learning together, sharing the same concern, the same excitement and joy of learning. A widow of 65 years in Mehbubnagar district finds in the slate and pencil a silent companion in a dark and lonely corner of her existence, deriving a lot of solace and comfort from reading and writing. Campaigns in this sense have promoted social and emotional integration. They have also promoted linguistic integration and communal harmony. Learners, who are domiciled in a State and who have assimilated the history, geography and culture of that State, are willing to learn in the State's standard language (in preference to learning through their mother tongue) so that they can identify themselves better with the mainstream.

About five million volunteers, about 2.5 to three lakh master trainers, about 15 to 20,000 resource persons and and about 1000 key resource persons are rendering voluntary service of a scale and quality which was not witnessed before. The majority of them are student volunteers (around 60 per cent) while about 40 per cent of the volunteers come from the non-student youth belonging to a varied strata of the society, such as tailors, carpenters, mechanics, primary school teachers (serving and retired), ex-servicemen, bank employees, employees of public sector undertakings, government employees, employees of cooperatives and elders—all imbued with a new pride and patriotism, a new spirit of service and sacrifice. A leprosy afflicted middle aged person in the district of Midnapore, who at one time was ex-communicated from the society (for being a victim of leprosy), now discovers in teaching a new elixir of life. Such stories can be recounted in good number.

Several volunteers have succeeded in mobolising Scheduled Caste and minorities women to break the barriers of *purdah* and transcend the shackles and fetters of a conservative society to join the literacy classes; many others have succeeded in motivating the learners addicted to alcohol to give up drinking. There are numerous instances (in Midnapore and Burdwan TLCs in West Bengal) where th wife is the volunteer teacher (VT) while the husband is the learner and vice-versa. Hindu volunteers have been teaching Muslim learners and vice-versa; there are volunteers belonging to SC and ST while learners belong to the upper caste, the former representing one of the finest specimens of dedication. The campaign has converted *nishidhapalli* (red-light areas) to *pavitrapalli* (decent and civilised colony).

The activity in a learning centre itself remained unaffected by the fury of communal riots affecting the whole village and eventually helped in defusing the communal situation. In several villages of AP, where the campaign has been successfully conducted, untouchability and feuds on account of caste and stratification bedevilling day-to-day existence are issues of the past. The teaching-learning process has created and reinforced an awareness of the needs, rights and obligations. This awareness has manifested itself in terms of enrolment and retention of children in the school system, immunisation of pregnant mothers and their children, health, hygiene, environmental sanitation, children, ORT and small family norm.

Yet another strength of the campaign is that women are participating in the teaching-learning process in much larger numbers (about 70 per cent) and with much greater enthusiasm than men. They are more vocal, more articulate and more assertive than before. Through literacy they have been able to perceive the generative sources of their disadvantage and are guarding up their loins to fight these sources. Hundreds of women's groups in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka have been made aware of the evils of bootlegging and have been raising their voice against alcoholism.

A number of grassroot level institutions, such as village and panchayat level committees, are emerging. Through these the learners can transform themselves from the status of passive beneficiaries to that of active participants of the process of development and manage their own affairs with strength, courage and confidence. Some of these institutions have struck deep roots and have acquired the capability of managing the formal school system, the NEF and AE programmes.

As more and more districts get covered by the TLC, the governmental bureaucracy gets closer to the people; it becomes more positive, sensitive and empathetic. As Poromesh Acharya, a distinguished historian and management expert and member of the Executive Committee of the NLMA, writes:

> The strongest point of the West Bengal programme, as we have observed, is the perfect coordination between the administration and the panchayat. In every district that we have visited, we noticed that the District Collector and the *sabhadhipati* of the Zilla Parishad were working in unison. The District Collector and his team became whole-time workers It is, for the first time, that the entire district administration went to the people instead of the people coming to them. It was a unique exposure for them and they enjoyed it. I saw District Collectors walking through the muddy road, their hair greyed with the dust. There was hardly any difference between a political worker, a volunteer and an administrator. All the barriers got broken This was no mean achievement.

The campaigns have also produced a unique confluence of creative forces and energies. Creative writers, thinkers, artists, environmentalists and women activists have come together to write songs, slogans, *nukkad nataks*, role-plays and simulation exercises and to render them soulfully in myriad forms in different parts of the country. Every activity in the campaign in general and in the learning centres in particular acquires the shape of a festival. Whether it is Independence Day or Republic Day or Ganesh Chaturthi or Saraswati Puja or Onam or Pongal or Durga Puja or Diwali or World Literacy Day (September 8) or World Population Day (July 16) or World Environmental Day (June 5) or World Women's Day (March 8), every activity is converted into a mass festival and every mass festival is celebrated in such a manner that the celebration is harnessed to the advantage of literacy. They arouse and awaken the whole community for literacy work. A good number of songs, slogans, drama, elocution, essay and poster competitions on literacy are being held on these occasions which bring out the ingenuity, creativity, innovativeness and resourcefulness of individuals and groups.

VII

THE narration in the preceding paragraphs is only a minuscule of numerous positive indicators on the impact of the TLCs on attitudes, approaches and consciousness of individuals as also on the overall quality of their day-to-day life. We have been generally speaking of two types of evaluation in relation to a TLC district, that is, (a) evaluation of learning outcome, and (b) programme evaluation or impact evaluation. Successive evaluation studies of the TLCs which have been conducted so far, like in Ernakulam (Kerala), Burdwan, Birbhum, Bankura, Hooghly, Midnapore and North 24-Parganas (West Bengal), Sindhudurg and Wardha (Maharashtra), Chittoor and Nellore (Andhra Pradesh), Durg and Narsingpur (Madhya Pradesh), Muzaffarpur (Bihar), and Bijapur and Dakshin Kannada (Karnataka) have primarily concentrated on the number of persons actually made literate and numerate in terms of the levels laid down in the NLM document. Some of them have thrown some light on the bridge or partnership built between the government departments and functionaries, representatives of the people, social and educational activists, media and communication channels, etc.

Two reports prepared so far have provided some idea of the sociological impact of the total literacy campaign. These are (a) "Sociological Impact of Total Literacy Campaign: The Case of Midnapore" conducted by Chandan Dasgupta of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences; and (b) "Towards Developing a Conceptual Framework for Sustaining Literacy based on Some Field Experiences" by Ms Nitya Rao of the National Institute of Adult Education. There is also a third study captioned "Total Literacy Campaign in West Bengal: A Study of Midnapore, Hooghly and Birbhum" by Poromesh Acharya and his associates of the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta, which is primarily a study on the soundness, adequacy and effectiveness of planning, preparations and execution of the TLC though it does throw some light on the impact of the campaign on the level of general awareness of the people, their motivation and participation in the campaign.

It would be useful to critically examine the findings of these studies with reference to the objectives of the NLM. People's empowerment is the most important objective of the Mission in qualitative terms. The objective has thus been stated:

> Functional Literacy implies becoming aware of the causes of their derivation and moving towards amelioration of their condition through organistion and participation in the process of development.
>
> Functional Literacy implies acquiring skills to improve the economic status and general well-being.

Who are the people and what is people's empowerment? In ordinary parlance, people would mean all categories of persons working and living in an area who would be the beneficiaries of all development programmes. For our purpose and the context in which functional literacy has been used in the NLM document, the word 'people' refers to persons or certain target groups who constitute the rural poor, the deprived and the disadvantaged. They constitute the small and marginal farmers, the landless agricultural labourers, the sharecroppers, the rural artisans, the fishermen and women, the leather workers, the building and construction workers, the forest labourers, the salt workers; the contract labourers, the migrant workers. They are not uniformly placed in terms of employment and wages, but there are two common threads running through their predicament. These are: (a) they are victims of malfunctional and dysfunctional middlemen and work in a situation which is akin to bondage for all practical purposes; and (b) they are not aware of the viciousness of the phonemenon. They do not know what they do not know.

If 'critical consciousness' is an important index of true development according to Paulo Friere, they lack that critical consciousness which can enable them to understand their strength and weakness vis-a-vis the strength and weaknesses of their adversary (ies) and which can also enable them to acquire the wherewithal to grapple with the hostile forces and eventually overcome them. Let us analyse the extent to which the TLCs have fostered this critical consciousness and to what extent this is being used as a tool of people's empowerment.

Two examples may be taken from Ms Nitya Rao's study of the TLCs in Pondicherry and Pudukottai. To quote from the study on the TLC Pondicherry:

> The response from women was tremendous at all levels during the campaign. There is widespread almost universal male alcoholism in the State, making men's contribution to household income almost negligible. Women work very hard to support their families and, therefore, aspire for better employment opportunities and earnings. Development programmes specifically for women, like the DWACRA, do exist in the State but no purposive effort to integrate it with the literacy movement has been made whether in terms of identifying the most needy beneficiaries or even in terms of developing the DWACRA groups around learning groups which could facilitate the growth of a common group purpose.

Analysing the present sorry state of affairs in Puduvai Arivoli Iyakkam and the factors contributing thereto, she writes:

> The inability to address local problems on the spot and work out solutions for the same has led to a decline in enthusiasm over the months. To take an example, twice there were floods in a fishing hamlet whereby three rows of houses got washed away. The people wanted financial assistance for housing but this issue was not taken up. Similarly, the fisherwomen take the catch to the fish market in the morning and again return there to work for contractors in the afternoon as their earnings are very low. An attempt to introduce the Fish Aggregation Device to increase collection/production was made. However,

> privately owned launches came and smashed these devices. The other method of increasing earnings by plugging the holes at the marketing end through organisation of marketing collectives was not discussed or attempted.

The above example is indicative of the vicelike grip of middlemen (contractors) which drive the people—the poor, the weak and the disadvantaged—to a state of penury and desperation. The middlemen act as agents of the principal employer in matters of recruitment of migrant labour, in matters of payment of nominal advances (more as a tool of allurement than as a positive incentive), in matters of supply of raw materials, often of poor quality, collection of the finished product, rejection (*chat*) on the ground of poor finish, sale of those finished products of alleged poor quality and appropriation of the sale proceeds to their full advantage (as in the case of beedi workers), denial of remunerative price to the workers for their hard labour and product of their labour (both by way of cheating in weighment and calculation, particularly in piece rates relevant in brick kilns and stone quarries, taking full advantage of ignorance and illiteracy of the workers) so on and so forth. They virtually rule the roost. The fishermen and women who receive the advances from these middlemen for purchase of boat and net for deep sea fishing do so often at a discount and are forced to part with a major share of their produce (catch) to the middlemen—a practice which is akin to the theory of unequal exchange in Economics or bonded labour system under Section 2(g) of the Bonded Labour System Act. The same is true of all other categories and sub-categories of unorganised rural labour masses. They lack the power to individually bargain for their irreducible barest minimum (for sheer biological survival) against organised onslaughts and vested interests which are too powerful for them. As the wily middlemen thrive and prosper by manipulation and cheating at the expense of the poor, the latter sunk in loans, debts and advances slide lower and lower on the scale of humanity.

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IS there a way out? Organisation of the unorganised rural poor into aggregations, informal groups, formal formations like cooperatives is certainly a way out but it can be meaningful if the following two conditions are fulfilled, that is, (a) the entire process of organisation must be preceded by meticulous planning and systematic execution, by orientation, conscientisation and awareness building through literacy; (b) the government cannot bring about the organisation of the rural poor but can certainly act as a catalytic agent to enable and facilitate the entire process with empathy and sensitivity and not view the process as a threat to the status quo.

In the context of Puduvai Arivoli Iyakkam, Ms Nitya Rao cites two case studies on the process of organisation of the rural poor, one very encouraging and the other not so encouraging. To recount the first:

> Father Anthonisamy of the Holy Redeemers and also on the Executive Committee of the Arivoli Iyakkam believes in learning by doing. He conducted a debt survey amongst an Arivoli group and found that 85 per cent of the learners were in debt. Through the Holy Redeemers, those paying more than 10 per cent interest per month were redeemed immediately. The same amount apportioned into principal, interest and savings is deposited in the group that was organised. In one area, this thrift and credit group has even taken a space and employed the volunteer to maintain their records and accounts. Almost all the money collected is being revolved amongst the members in the form of small loans. Such an initiative, by actively involving the people in finding solution to their problems, has not only generated discussion and awareness about the whole issue of debt, interest rates, savings but has also motivated the group members to explore the various alternatives available to them, made them realise the importance of maintaining records and hence desirous of strengthening their own cognitive skills.

The example of the second category which is not so encouraging is narrated by Ms Rao as below:

> An attempt has been to develop village level committees. As a part of this, women's sub-committees have been formed. Women are more forthcoming as this gives them an opportunity to interact in society and gradually bring about changes in social and, more particularly, gender relations. They, however, desire some financial assistance in terms of seed money for progressing towards a situation of economic independence as well. This aspect has, however, not yet been worked out, leading to some frustration. The women, therefore, have also not gained the confidence to take up social issues like alcoholism and face social conflicts due to their position of economic dependence.

It is evident that the objective of the NLM in terms of promoting 'participation' through organisations of the 'people' has not been fulfilled in any worthwhile extent even though sincere efforts have been made in that direction. Let us turn to Pudukottai, the second case study of Ms Rao to see if there is any concrete answer to this dilemma of people's empowerment.

Pudukottai, which a year ago was a small and comparatively unknown, comparatively underdeveloped district, is today something more than a geographical expression. It is vibrant with a new spirit, a new ethos, a new identity. Pudukottai along with the Pasumpon Muthuramalingam Thevar (PMT) district has earned the unique distinction of being the first fully literate district in Tamil Nadu. It was declared so on August 11, 1992 at 6 PM by the Governor of Tamil Nadu, Dr Bhishmanarain Singh, at a special function held at the Pudukottai parade ground.

There are a host of exciting, soul-stirring and inimitable features in Arivoli Iyakkam, Pudukottai. They transcend the limited frontiers of mechanical reading, writing and arithmatic and encompass the process of making a complete man or woman or child. It is impossible to recount them. In terms of forming organisations or collectivities of the people, using the literacy campaign as a tool to forge the solidarity of the people in general and women in particular and promote their empowerment, however, it has few parallels. Whether it is training 60,000 women to learn cycling while learning to read and write or it is organisation of women quarry workers or women gem cutters and gem polishers or women potters or women palm basket weavers, each has its unique innovativeness. Behind the entire effort to organise the unorganised, the less privileged and deprived sections of society lies the imagination and ingenuity of many committed activists and organisers but one person stands out clear and distinct. She is Sheila Rani Chunkath, the energetic, articulate and dynamic Collector of Pudukottai and also the Chairperson of Arivoli Iyakkam. Almost anything and everything which centred round Arivoli bears the indelible stamp of her personality, transparent sincerity and total commitment to Arivoli. To quote a small fraction of her initiative to organise the women quarry members of Pudukottai as recorded by Ms Rao:

> The district has about 450 quarries and 4500 women quarry workers Last year when the quarries were brought in for auction, the contractors refused to bid at the offset price as they wanted to depress the price further. The Collector, however, organised the workers into groups of 20 women each and gave them the quarrying rights at nominal rates for a period of three years. Currently, there are about 150 such women's groups. They were provided loans of Rs 1000 each from Indian Bank for purchase of tool kits, uniforms and initial working capital. They take a daily wage of between Rs 20 to 30 and then share the profits every week. Men can also work in these quarries on daily wages The workers, mostly women, have gradually learnt to write out their own bills and receipts and maintain their production accounts. Two of the group leaders, Vasantha and Sholai, showed us their accounts. They were totally illiterate and have learnt this only through attending the Arivoli classes. They also collect all the members of their groups for the classes. Some are not too interested still, as they feel exhausted after their hard day's work and prefer to go to sleep. Gradually, however, more are getting motivated. They want to understand their production accounts, in order to avoid conflicts over distribution of wages and profits, to read their loan and savings pass books and so on By knowing to read and write, the contractors and transporters can also not cheat them

One can draw several interesting and useful lessons from the two examples of Pondicherry and Pudukottai. In Pondicherry, the campaign was sponsored and supported fully by the government at the initial stage. It is as a result of this support that the first phase of the campaign in the basic literacy stage could be brought to its logical and successful conclusion. Puduvai Arivoli Iyakkam became the symbol of hope, pride and resurgence for many other States/UTs. As, however, the campaign acquired the character of a mass movement and became a tool of empowerment of the masses, it was perceived as a threat to the sacrosanctity and constitutional inviolability of private property rights and the status quo. It is at this crucial stage that the campaign has almost lost its momentum as a movement of the people and has got into a jam. It could have matured into one of the finest movements of Indian history but sadly these lofty expectations have been belied.

The Pudukottai TLC experiment stands out on its own and in sharp contrast to that of Puduvai Arivoli Iyakkam. Every campaign is primarily a movement and secondarily a programme but it has to be conceptualised, planned, initiated and implemented in a well-structured and well-coordinated manner so that the desired results are achieved in a short time. It is here that the government functionaries have a major role to play, not so much as a control mechanism but as a catalytic force, enabling and facilitating mechanism. Such a role was played admirably by the District Administration, Pudukottai and more particularly by the Collector and Chairperson of Arivoli Iyakkam. Organisation of 3000 out of 4500 women quarry workers into cooperatives and giving the quarries on lease to them is a case in point. This was an unusual, unconventional and extraordinary step. This required a lot of grit, courage and determination which the energetic Collector, Pudukottai had possessed in abundant measure. Once it was made known that she was empathetic and sensitive to the genuine needs of the poor and her commitment to alleviation of their plight through organisation became public, others followed suit. This is how the Assistant Director (Mines) at the district headquarters, who would have ordinarily followed the conventional approach in matters of grant of lease, was found sensitive to the women's need at every step. As Ms Rao writes:

> Seeing poor, rural women struggling hard to break out of their social barriers and overcome economic hurdles, seems to bring out the goodness and desire to help in government officials and ordinary people as well.

It was, however, not all a smooth sail. As the contractors felt deprived of their quarry rights and hence profits, they refused to allow trucks entry into the area. The threat continues and help from law and order authorities has to be sought time and again. But the problem arising out of the threat is not intractable or unresolvable as the sympathy of an empathetic administration lies with the quarry workers, the poor SC women who deserve help.

Conclusion

IN a pluralistic, multi-lingual and multi-cultural country like ours where conditions vary widely from region to region, from district to district and even within the same district, it will be a travesty of truth to say that only one approach, far less the campaign approach, should be adopted and implemented for uniform results. Those of us who have been with the Mission since its inception, have accepted the limitations of a uniform social policy being valid for the whole country at one point of time. Instead of advocating the inflexibility and sacrosanctity of any policy or any approach, we have all along made ourselves amenable to new ideas and suggestions and have advocated a policy of learning by sharing in a climate of total openness and flexibility.

It is acknowledged that neither the spread nor the impact of the campaign strategy is uniform, being far less dramatic. Like any other social policy, the campaign is also the product of a particular point of time or milieu or setting and it has to weather all the storms and vicissitudes of that time. It cannot get away from it. Having said this, however, we will not be doing justice to the campaign approach if we do not acknowledge its rationale and force. It needs to be told and retold with full conviction that, after having experimented with successive and alternative models of literacy and education over a timeframe of more than four decades (1950-92), we have now settled down to a model—the campaign mode of total literacy which has given us lot of hope, faith and conviction that this is one model which can assure us of the right results in the right time in the right manner in the most participative, democratic and cost-effective way. The freedom and spontaneity with which people have taken to this mode, the cultural renaissance which it has generated, the literacy-friendly environment which it has created and sustained and the glitter of hope, excitement and joy which it has left in the face of millions of learners and volunteers, are all factors which have renewed and reinforced our commitment to this mode.

It has, however, to be remembered that the campaign is a mode and not the goal. Total literacy is our goal, our polestar, the cinosure of all eyes. The paths may be more than one but all of them must lead to the primacy or centrally of that goal. There cannot be any compromise with this supreme truth. Even if we have suffered some reverses due to extraneous factors or circumstances beyond our control, our faith in the efficacy of the approach which is now fairly well-proven and well-tested must remain unshaken. Since success in areas of social policy and their execution is rather elusive and not uniform and is also shortlived, it was also throughout being contended that stories of such success which are also stories of absorbing human interest must be documented for history, failing which posterity will not forgive us for not telling the strategy we chose for ourselves and the direction in which we have moved so far.

We have certainly not achieved any miracles through the campaign approach and we have to traverse a rather long and thorny path to reach the ultimate goal but every single milestone (be it Kerala or Burdwan or Pudukottai) must remind us of the hurdles crossed and the trials and tribulations awaiting ahead. There is no question of giving up or surrendering in the midst of this long journey to eternity. To conclude in the words of the Kattopanishads:

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्यवरान् निबोधत
क्षुरस्य धारा निशिता दुरत्यया
दुर्गम् पथस्तत् कवयो वदन्ति

Arise, aware (O Man)! Realise (that atman*) having approached the excellent (teachers). Like the sharp edge of a razor is that path, difficult to cross and hard to tread—so say the poets (the wise).* ■

(Concluded)

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PACE

Conditions in West Bengal: Problems, Prospects

PULAK NARAYAN DHAR

The following article is based on a paper presented to the authorities in West Bengal entrusted with improving the state of education in the State. It was presented on behalf of the All Bengal State Government College Teachers' Association. The author is the Joint Secretary of the organisation.

—Editor

Though much thought has been devoted to reconstruction of education on broad lines since independence we have been hardly able to evolve a scientific education system and curricula in India. West Bengal is no exception.

The journey from the Radhakrishnan Commission to the Bhabatosh Datta Commission of West Bengal in search of a proper scientific education policy has yielded little results due to the non-implementation of their recommendations.

It was observed by the Kothari Commission in 1966 that the situation in higher education during the academic year "broadly alternates betwen slackness and strain— slackness during the session and strain at the time of examination". The situation has not improved by any standard since then. This is also admitted in the controversial "Challenge of Education" document, which says:

> The internal efficiency of the higher education system is extremely low. Neither Colleges nor even Universities are started after due consideration of academic need.

The West Bengal Government showed some interest in removing some major defects of or reforming the education system when it initiated the Bhabatosh Datta Commission in 1986. But unfortunately the report of the Commission has been kept in cold storage.

Our view is that the major recommendations of the Commission, especially about the Government Colleges, are still valid and deserve due consideration.

About the problems obtaining at present and the suggestions to remove them, our views are stated as follows:

Decline in Standard of Higher Education

The standard of higher education, especially at the undergraduate level, has markedly fallen because of the poor standards of education at the secondary and higher secondary levels.

The reasons have been enumerated below:

a) Adequately equipped teachers are not always recruited for political and partisan interests.

b) Classes are overcrowded and proper attention cannot be given by the teachers to the students. The teacher-student ratio is also far from being satisfactory. Excessive load of work falls upon the teachers of the schools which is bound to affect the quality of teaching.

c) The language policy of the government is defective. Abolition of English at the primary stage has been proved counter-productive. Teaching of English from Class VI is hardly adequate under the present system to enable the students acquire sufficient vocabulary even to understand unseen passages given to them in the secondary examination, and when they scramble through to the higher secondary level they face stiff language problems. They remain perpetually weak. There is a carry-forward of this weakness at the higher undergraduate level when the students have to follow class lectures or textbooks mostly in English by foreign authors.

It has promotced a dual system of education and caused the proliferation of the so-called English medium institutions and neglect of good Bengali medium schools.

Our suggestion is that English should be taught at the primary level preferably from Class III, as was done before. English and Bengali are regarded as *compulsory additional* subjects at the undergraduate level at present. It is made compulsory for the undergraduate students to appear for examinations of these subjects but their marks are not counted towards success or failure. The result: students do not bother to attend classes or learn anything. Our suggestion is that this system should be scrapped and English/Bengali should be made compulsory at the college level as in the past.

d) There is a gap between the secondary and higher secondary curricula. The syllabi of both the secondary and higher secondary are also very burdensome. There is enough scope to teach the students the fundamentals of science and there is need to prune the details which they should learn at the higher level.

It is also our view that the syllabus should be graded to the all-India level so that there is a parity and our students do not suffer in several competitive examinations in comparison with students from other States. The all-India syllabi drawn up under the aegis of the University Grants Commission may serve as models.

e) To improve the standard of language learing Sanskrit/Persian should be introduced as a compulsory subject in schools as was the case till the late 1970s. The learning of Bengali will be strengthened if Sanskrit is taught from Class VI as was the case before the 1970s.

Regarding the methodology of language teaching, especially that of teaching English and Sanskrit, there should be proper thinking in consultation with the language teachers, because it is not the stiffness of the language as erroneously presumed by many, but the stale method of teaching that saps the interest of the students and kills the subject.

Move Away from Exam-Oriented Teaching

We are not in favour of examination-oriented teaching. The basic objective or educationis largely frustrated with too frequent examinations. Frequent examinations in the colleges disturb the regular class routine and the syllabus cannot be completed. The class rooms are often requisitioned for outside examinations such as Public Service Commission Examinations, Central Government Officers' Examinations, etc.

Examinations may be conducted in other government buildings in the cities/districts without hampering classes.

During the time of elections colleges are taken over by the authorities to provide accommodation for the police personnel for a long period of time. This practice should be done away with.

Our suggestion is that the government should have separate buildings for these purposes as examinations and elections of different categories are held more often than not.

Different departments of colleges are not sufficiently equipped with teaching staff. The attitude of the government in appointing teachers in the vacant posts or in creating new posts wherever necessary runs counter to the evolution of an ideal situation. As a result, justice cannot be done to all the Honours papers in many colleges. A decline in the standards of teaching has been a natural consequence.

There is some truth in the allegation that examination scripts beginning from the secondary down to the post-graduate level are not properly evaluated.

A proper time-frame for examining the scripts should be set not with a view to publishing results in record time but for thorough and objective evaluation of them. Quite often an examiner is required to evaluate too many scripts in too short a period, which he finds difficult to do. A proper selection procedure for examiners is also necessary while distributing scripts. Political or personal considerations should not be allowed to influence decisions in this regard.

Recruitment and Posting of Teachers

Another issue that aggravates the problems of higher education in West Bengal is the recruitment and posting of teachers in different colleges. While the recruitments through the PSC are fairly impartial in cases of lecturers (though not always so for higher posts), they are not fair and just through the College Service Commission (CSC). The impartiality of the CSC in this regard is not above suspicion.

Cases of appointment and good postings of inferior candidates are galore. This has generated a deep sense of frustration among the candidates appearing for interviews before the CSC.

The role of the experts in the selection board of the CSC is negligible as they have very small percentage of marks in their hands to be given to the candidates. It falls far short of determining the final selection. The heavy load of marks vested in the hands of other members (non-teaching experts) can upset the recommendation of the subject experts. This system should be reviewed and changed in the interest of having superior teachers in the colleges.

Lack of Standard Bengali Texts

While introduction of the system of instruction in Bengali at the Honours as well as the post-graduate level is a welcome measure, sufficient attention should be given to the writing of standard textbooks in Bengali.

It is noted with dismay that students follow the ordinary substandard books written in Bengali and do not even see the prescribed textbooks written in English, not to speak of consulting necessary reference books or doing library work.

This is largely due to their ignorance of English which is systematically ignored at both the school and college levels. For the Honours and post-graduate students adequate emphasis should be laid on the study of the English language for the proper comprehension of the contents of higher level books.

Moreover, authorship for writing textbooks in Bengali should be widely and more judiciously distributed so that a good number of quality books can be made available to the students.

The cooperation of the different teachers' organisations can be sought in this regard. A more vigorous initiative should be taken by the government in this regard.

Library

We like to draw attention to the library—the most vital academic wing of the college. The librarians should be given the status of teachers. Most of the college libraries suffer from a dearth of space and staff.

Immediate steps should be taken to upgrade the standards of the libraries by improving the infrastructural facilities.

Transfer of Teachers

In the State there are Government and Non-government Colleges. The government bears the burden of the exchequer for running both. While the teachers of the Non-Government Colleges are not controlled by the West Bengal Service Rules and are not transferable, the Government College teachers are directly controlled by the WBSSR which is a legacy of the colonial administration.

Transfers of teachers in the Government Colleges pose a great problem both to teachers and students. It has become a routine administrative work of the Education Department to transfer the teachers of Government Colleges at an interval of 3/4 years from one of the four Zones (A, B, C, D).

Needless to say, for the lack of a government order (policy regarding transfer issue) a great deal of political machination and administrative fiat is exercised to favour some teachers and humble others. In its present form, it does not serve any academic objective and only eats into the exchequer of the government by way of transfer expenditure. It is high time that a rational transfer policy was formulated in consultation with the teachers' organisations.

Lack of proper application of mind to the subjects and their specialised branches while transferring teachers from one college to another is detrimental to the interests of the students.

Frequent transfers from one zone to another make it difficult for the teachers to get settled and devote entirely to the academic development of their institutions.

Mechanical transfers should, therefore, be avoided and a rational transfer policy evolved.

There is a mechanical logic reared in certain quarters that teachers of outstanding calibre should also be transferred, irrespective of their reputation, from premier institutions like the Presidency College to the colleges of far-off districts as 'public servants' because the students in those colleges also deserve to be taught by them.

What they cannot understand is that neither the colonical nor the post-colonial governments were guided by this academic motive while transferring teachers (public servants) from one place to another. Moreover it is a mechanical bureaucratic way of looking at the matter that results in wastage of talents. Talented students in greater numbers used to get the service of talented teachers in the institutions where they were posted.

It is our firm belief that Prof Tarak Nath Sen or Prof Bhabatosh Datta or Prof Amal Bhattacharya or Prof U.N. Ghoshal would not have served the interests of the students better than they did from their own stations.

It may be mentioned in this connection that teachers of different universities are not transferred from one university to another. This is also true in the case of the teachers of Non-Government Colleges. The number of Government Colleges is a tiny drop in the ocean of the vast multitude of Non-Government Colleges in the State. So, the logic of carrying better education to the districts by physically lifting one or two outstanding teachers from Calcutta or otherwise is unscientific.

Expansion of Higher Education

The expansion of higher education has been of a unilateral nature. The observations of the Education Commission of 1964-66 are worth mentioning in this regard:

> There is a general feeling in India that the situation in higher education is not satisfactory and even alarming in some ways, that the average standards have been falling, and that rapid expansion has resulted in lowering quality.

The enrolment of students in the universities has registered a rise from one million in 1965-66 to more than four million at present. In West Bengal there was only one university in 1950-51 and 90 colleges of general education. At present there are seven universitites and nearly 330 colleges of general education. About 30 per cent of the annual budget of the State is spent on education in total.

It is lamentable that in the context of the present socio-economic conditions the centres of higher education are being treated as huge waiting rooms accommodating a vast multitude of literate and educated unemployed youths. The norms of admission to different courses of higher education too should not be downgraded just to popularise education among the masses at the cost of the basic purpose of education.

While we feel that the education system should be broadbased and primary and secondary education should be made universal, we also feel that at the higher levels of education the goal of excellence must always be kept in mind. Higher education at the post-graduate level should be decentralised to lessen the burden of the universities and maintain excellence. In this connection proper infrastructural facilities need also be taken into consideration. In some Government Colleges PG courses are taught (Presidency College, Hooghly Mohsin College). Their preformances can be assessed and PG courses can be opened in other colleges too.

University Statutes

Under the present statutes of the universities in West Bengal undue weightage is being given to the opinions of the non-teaching members of different university bodies who far outnumber the teacher members. This compromises the vital academic interests of the universities and and becomes eventually detrimental to the interests of its constituent and affiliated colleges as well.

This preponderance of non-academic leverage is often used to reap political dividends, and the true academic interests are seldom met in this vitiated atmosphere. So this statute should be scrapped and replaced by one which could envisage greater participation of teacher members in the different university bodies while purely academic issues are taken up for discussion.

The boards of studies in different faculties are not constituted on academic considerations alone. Those bodies are, more often than not, constituted on political considerations. As a result, they are seldom able to perform properly their academic duties like selection of paper setters, examiners, framing of syllabi. It is not only seniority in service but also academic records and performances of the teachers that should be valued while forming such bodies.

A broadbased discussion on important academic issues should be held throughout the State before taking decisions on them to elicit scientific opinion.

The system of election of the representatives for the reserved seats of the Government College teachers in the Senate is highly defective. The selection of the representatives of Government College teachers is determined solely by the votes of the non-Government college teachers. A person from the Government Colleges can be elected by getting the support from the Non-Government College teachers in the universities.

Autonomy of Colleges

During the past few years the autonomy of the different universities has been eroded to a considerable extent in the wake of tensions between the Chancellor and the government regarding the appointments of Vice-Chancellors of the Calcutta and Burdwan Universities. The excessive zeal of the government to see its chosen men posted in the responsible posts of the universities has definitely lowered the autonomy of the universities and made them the hotbeds of party politics. The present statute of the University of Calcutta has reduced it to an appendage of Writers' Buildings.

The government seems to be suffering from a negative sense about the question of autonomy in regard to the colleges. While the UGC is in favour of granting autonomy to some colleges in West Bengal, the government is still averse to this scheme. The government ignores the academic aspects of the issue in the name of curbing the so-called 'elitist' bias in the education system.

We think that the issue of autonomy cannot be dismissed so cursorily. Granting of autonomy to some colleges would lessen the burden of the universities.

The issue of autonomy should be placed before the educated people of West Bengal and an extensive discussion should be immediately initiated by the government or the universities to elicit considered opinion. It should not be treated as a closed issue. Autonomy is a step towards decentralisation which is greatly needed for the smooth conduct of the university examinations and other academic activities. The Bhabatosh Datta Commission has given serious thought to it and its recommendations cannot be ignored.

Government Colleges

Regarding the Government Colleges we may quote from the Bhabatosh Datta Commission:

> The basic justification for Government Colleges is that they are quality colleges. The Commission recommends that the Government Colleges should continue, subject to the condition that every effort should be made to maintain and improve their standard of service. This will involve substantial capital grants for buildings, equipments, hostels and staff quarters and large revenue grants for libraries and laboratories and also for sports, etc. (pp. 126-7)

But recently there has been a devaluation of the Government Colleges and their services since the introduction of the UGC Scales of Pay in 1973. It has been further devalued after the new UGC Pay Scales in 1986. The government has by its executive fiat reduced the attraction of service in the Government Colleges. It has kept the recruitment qualifications higher and lowered the pay in comparison with the previous standard vis-a-vis University and Private Colleges.

There are other factors bringing down the standards of the Government Colleges:

a) The strength of students since the introduction of plus two courses in Government Colleges has increased by more than 30 per cent. The government yielded to local political pressure and introduced morning sections in almost all Government Colleges. This has been done in total disregard of the staff pattern and the normal student-teacher ratio.

b) Morning sections in Government Colleges are run by hiring the services of part-time teachers (especially in the Humanities stream). Many of them are outsiders and some are drafted from among the insiders. For the services rendered by the part-time teachers a paltry sum of Rs 100 or Rs 150 is offered to them. There is, therefore, a dearth of good teachers and the students suffer.

c) Disparity in distribution of posts in different Government Colleges is another point worth mentioning. In the Department of English in Chandernagore College, for example, there are 12 sanctioned posts, whereas in Jhargram Raj College there are five posts. The number of sanctioned posts in Zoology and Botany, taken together in Darjeeling Government College alone, constitute almost 50 per cent of the total sanctioned posts in Government Colleges in these subjects.

Just a couple of years ago admission to the Government Colleges was strictly on the basis of merit and the college authorities were very particular in restricting the number of students to a reasonable limit. Now, in most colleges, especially in colleges outside Calcutta, pressure is built up by outsiders (political persons, DPI) to cross the desired limit of the student strength. Almost one thousand students were enrolled in only one class in the Darjeeling Government College last year.

Political interference in the internal administrative and academic matters has become an impediment to the smooth functioning of the colleges. Neither the Minister for Higher Education nor the DPI can provide any safeguard against this and generate confidence among the teachers. This should be stopped immediately and we believe that given the political will, the Government can put a stop to this.

Education should be free from political bias. There should be sufficient flexibility in the education system to help grow a free and open minded generation of youths. Educational institutions should be regarded not as centres of political recruits but as workshops for the development of mind and character of the youths. ■

'Helping Children Learn'

VINOO HORA

The mushrooming of pre-primary schools as stepping stones to admission in recognised schools has led to many a speculation whether children between the age-group of three to five should at all be sent to school. More often than not it is felt that sending children to school at an early age cramps the individuality of the child. The many do's and don'ts, the enforced learning, restrictions on his movements, play, could harm rather than aid his physical as well as mental development.

Prominent educationists, non-governmental social organisations such as Child Relief and You (CRY), Centre for Learning Resources, Pune etc., while accepting the necessity of pre-primary schools, have applied themselves in thinking out ways and means of making learning fun and part of play for young children. Rote learning has definitely been ruled out. On the contrary, it is felt that like primary teachers, pre-primary teachers too should undergo special training which will help them to create certain activities for children to keep them absorbed, make them curious so that instead of the teacher asking questions and the child answering, it will be the other way round. The teacher will be there to guide the child on to the right path and leave the child to seek solutions to problems with just a little prompting.

It is universally acknowledged that at no time does a human being imbibe so much knowledge in his entire life as he does during the first five years of his life. Therefore, it is important that the child be exposed to stimulating experiences which promote mental growth and personality development. It becomes imperative than to understand the intellectual needs of the young child and to define mental stimulation. Zakiya Kurrien (Joint Director of the Centre for Learning Resources, Pune), deeply involved in developing inservice training for teachers and in designing learning materials for schools and non-formal educational programmes at the pre-primary and elementary levels, feels that every child must be given the opportunity to:

- communicate and express themselves freely,
- have many experiences involving all their senses,
- explore and experiment,
- observe and question,
- solve problems,
- create.

Play, emphasises Zakiya, is an indispensable avenue for learning. Play is work for a child. If one observes children at play, one can see the seriousness or rather the earnestness that a child brings to play. Play, explains Zakiya, clarifies concepts and gives children opportunities to explore, to imagine and to translate experience into something meaningful to them. Unfortunately, we adults have a puritanical streak in us and we fail to appreciate the value of play in the child's mental development.

However, mere paly activities and materials alone cannot lead to effective learning. Here comes the crucial role of a caring adult—a parent or a teacher.

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IN order to set guidelines for pre-primary school teachers, *anganwadi* or *balwadi* workers, Zakiya Kurrien has written a book titled *Helping Children Learn*, alongwith a picture supplement, with useful illustrations by Jeyanthi Manokaran. To promote the concepts, abilities and skills of young children, the chapters are classified as under:

Thinking Things Out: involving the skills of matching, understanding relationships, perceiving patterns and problem solving;

Developing Spoken Language: getting ready to read and write, beginning to count and calculate.

Many schools in Maharashtra — in Bombay, Pune and small towns and villages— have accepted the novel method of teaching pre-primary schoolchildren and have sent their teachers for training to the Centre for Learning Resources, Pune. The course is intensive but not of long duration, mainly of 10 days. Most *anganwadi* or *balwadi* workers use the low cost teaching kit provided by the Centre for Learning Resources, Pune—an innovation of Zakiya Kurrien and her colleagues.

But the teaching and learning process is a continuous one. It cannot be limited to the method professed in one book. The teachers must think of devising new materials or variations and widen the horizon of learning to sustain a lively interest in children. A basic thing parents and teachers ought to keep in mind is not to become over anxious about a young child's learning prowess. They tend to project their tension on to the children; it takes the joy out of learning and becomes counter-productive.

To popularise their novel mode of teaching and teaching materials, the Centre for Learning Resources, Pune held an exhibition from September 1-11, 1992 in New Delhi ably organised by CRY and well attended by the media and teachers. The exhibition was impressive and it appeared from overheard snatches of conversation that we may not hear the chant of "A for Apple" for long. ■

PM's Speech at NAM Summit

(Continued from page 6)

being objected to is the name. What is being asked is: Now that there are no blocs, why do you still say you are non-aligned? But if you are not non-aligned, are you aligned? No one among us would favour alignment with one bloc even if it is the only bloc. We may agree with it on issues on merit, but we are not aligned with it. So, how can you escape the concept of non-alignment?

There is a feeling that the non-aligned are today faced with a power structure which allows them little room for manoeuvre. I disagree with this assessment. When our Movement was relatively young, we had even less room for manoeuvre. Our economies were weak and our trade, cultural and even intellectual dependence on the metropolitan powers, was stronger than today. Over the past three decades, we have developed our own economic, technological and, above all, human resources. Our experience in international diplomacy is certainly richer. We are better placed than before in many respects. What is needed, I believe, is the over-arching solidarity and adherence to a shared vision which gave our Movement its original strength and mission.

The Non-Aligned Movement is uniquely placed to forge a global consensus on issues of global concern. The first and foremost concern is human survival, which obviously cannot be assured as long as weapons of mass destruction exist on our planet. We can never ignore this stark reality. The world has to become nuclear weapon-free and then go on to complete disarmament, adopting non-violence as its creed and credo.

We welcome the successful conclusion of the Chemical Weapons Convention at Geneva because it is a multilateral instrument with all State Parties assuming equal obligations and responsibilities, a pattern we would like to adopt to all weapons of mass destruction. As an immediate step, India envisages a Convention on the non-use of usable weapons, a verifiable freeze on the production of fissionable material for weapons purposes, a suspension of nuclear weapon tests and negotiations on general and complete disarmament, which should be undertaken through appropriate mechanisms between countries. Let our Movement put forward an attainable agenda for a world beyond deterrence, a world we can bring into being within this century.

Democratisation of the international order will have little meaning unless it encompasses economic as well as political aspects of inter-state realtions. Even at the risk of sounding old-fashioned, I may submit that a non-confrontationist, yet decisive North-South dialogue is needed today. This need is obvious because the major concerns of the South are no closer to a solution today than they were over a decade ago. There is no need to impute motives to anyone. It is sufficient to realise the approaches of the North and the South to economic problems, the fact of the interdependence and the indispensability of viable solutions. Besides, the dialogue should not be confined to Governments alone. It should become a dialogue between the peoples—particularly the youth—of the developed and the developing countries. This aspect is extremely important, since proper realisation on the part of the developed peoples will alone create conditions for a fruitful North-South dialogue.

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WE meet at a time when most developing countries have adopted policies that provide greater scope for enterprise, innovation and the operation of market forces. Their fortunes are now linked more directly to the external economic environment embracing the crucial issue of debt service, capital flows, access to technology, market access and commodity prices. These have now become more important than ever before.

The decline of multilateralism is indeed a matter of concern. If we are to halt this slide into a world of persistent monologue, it will be necessary for us to reactivate our consultative mechanisms at all multilateral fora, so that our voice does not get muffled. Economic and technological resources have become more widely dispersed than before. It is possible to build a coalition that advances our legitimate interests on different issues and enables our Movement to play the role of an effective interlocutor. The manner in which the developing countries managed to sustain their own agenda at the UNCED Conference in Rio is a pointer to what is possible if we function purposefully.

We are particularly concerned by the growing tendency to attach non-economic conditionalities to grant of bilateral and even multilateral assistance, and the increasingly stringent restrictions being imposed on transfers of technology to the developing countries. The ever-growing list of items subjected to the so-called dual-use restrictions effectively threatens to deprive the developing countries of the fruits of technological progress in many key areas. Such restrictions have come to cover everything from computers to machine tools to specialised alloys to chemicals and even to medical equipment. They are imposed in the name of preventing proliferation, even though the major responsibility for proliferation often rests with the very countries that are imposing the restrictions. This is extremely unfair.

The imperatives of ecological balance are closely related to the depletion, restoration and increase of resources. Surviving in harmony with Nature and the environment is necessary for sustained development and durable peace. Rajiv Gandhi had proposed the creation of a Planet Protection Fund which placed upon all countries, except the least developed, an obligation for assessing and developing environment-friendly technologies. I suggest that our Movement establish a mechanism to make concrete recommendations for the establishment of such a Fund. This will have to be a collective effort. A whole new range of environment-friendly technologies need to be developed and existing technologies based on disastrous over-exploitation of natural resources abandoned. A large number of our own countries have much to offer in this collective endeavour. Our peoples often have close affinity and kinship with Nature and have a long tradition of using their resources in traditional areas like herbal medicine, water-harvesting and management. We must adapt our traditions to our current needs, translate our know-how into know-why. This means that the developing countries should consciously embark on a massive and meaningful programme of Research and Development in several priority areas of concern to themselves. Whatever the impediments, this should be done by ourselves so that commercialisation of the fruits of the programme could be obviated and benefits could become available to all developing countries on a no-profit basis.

Empires once clamed that the sun never set on them. Today, it is we who can claim that the sun shall not set upon this far-flung Movement, spread across the continents. We must, therefore, dedicate ourselves to harness, with the help of innovative technology, the energy gifted to us by the sun for the benefit of this large chunk of humanity toiling in the sun. That will be a real day of deliverance on which we could fully utilise the energy potential of the sun and winds and waves that our countries are endowed with in plentiful measure. On that day, sustainable development will come to stay all over the globe.

Such self-reliance will enable us to harness the immense resources of talent and skill inherent in our people, and to conserve our limited financial resources. The G-15 was born out of this compelling realisation at the Belgrade Summit, and has now established itself as a core around which the Movement can promote South-South cooperation. Several practical projects of benefit to all countries are under implementation. India is proud to be the coordinator in two key areas of great promise to the future—Solar Energy applications and the establishment of Gene Banks. I have little doubt that there are many areas where our collective resources and talents can be harnessed for the benefit of humanity as a whole.

There is, however, one crucial aspect that deserves mention in the context of South-South Cooperation. Developing countries must themselves learn to recognise their own capacities and come out of the spell of the glamour of the developed countries. The South must respect the South, as a first step towards South-South cooperation. There is no need to elaborate further, since the phenomenon is known, though not always admitted.

Our Movement, collectively, has to ensure that the New World Order currently being discussed is not based on inherent inequality, intrusive politics or discriminatory regimes. Despite the inevitable diversities among us and sometimes among our individual interests, we share many common objectives and aspirations in respect of the future world. Our approach, therefore, has to be inclusive, coordinated and harmonised. It should seek to consolidate the areas of agreement and eschew those of disagreement with a conscious and determined effort, allowing growing cooperation between nations in various ways.

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WE recognise that the objectives of peace and development are inextricably linked to the cause of the rights and dignity of man. While there is much in common in the content and nature of human rights, there is inevitably a considerable area determined by the social, traditional and cultural mores of different societies. Norms of some societies cannot be unilaterally prescribed as absolute postulates for relations between States and societies. Many amongst us face a predicament where human rights are emphatically urged only for practitioners of terrorism or secessionism, while governments dealing with this menace are accused of violation of human rights. This blatant distortion cannot be countenanced. Freedom from fear, from any quarter whatever, must inform any meaninfgul definition of human rights.

Some long-standing issues of vital concern to the world still persist. In South Africa, the progress being made towards the elimination of racial discrimination and the establishment of a truly democratic government seems to have floundered on the rocks of violence together with inhibitions on the part of the South African regime. Our efforts should be directed at preventing any loss of momentum in the political and democratic activities that have been initiated for South Africa's national reconciliation, and international integration, as a democratic, non-racial state. The negotiations for resolving the Palestinian question within the framework of the Middle-East Peace Conference should be strengthened and supported so as to fulfil the legitimate aspirations and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. There should be no dilution of the efforts to fulfil the just expectations of the Palestinians.

Peace in Cambodia is yet ot be realised. We appeal to all concerned to join hands to restore harmony and stability to the Cambodian people. We mourn the tragedy and trauma which the former Republics of Yugoslavia have gone through in the last eighteen months and urge that the leaders return to paths of adjustment, reconciliation and peace. We are deeply anguished at the situation in Afghanistan, whose people have undergone immense hardship and deprivation in the long years of conflict. We hope and pray that they will resolve their differences peacefully.

The tragedy that has scourged Somalia is a scar on the conscience of man. Civil war has intensified the ravages of nature. It is stark horrors such as this that compels one to consider if we cannot think of a stand-by force of NAM volunteers, non-military in nature, ready to assist member-states of the Movement with willing and dedicated manpower in situations of crisis, where the humanitarian dimension transcends any other.

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WE are happy to note that the United Nations, at last, is coming into its own in the fifth decade of its existence. While even today there is a tendency to subordinate the global agenda to narrow national concerns, we are happy to note that the UN is more effective than ever before. The question now is how to make it even more effective. Democratisation is the first priority. The Security Council is functioning according to the ideas of the founders. It can be strengthened by enlarging it. The General Assembly has to be made more powerful not merely to represent the changes in its membership but the significant character of its universal composition. The actions of the Security Council should be more responsive to the voice of the majority, so that the United Nations comes up to the expectations of the changing world.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations has also become a much more critical link between the policies laid down by the different organs of the world body and their immediate and effective implementation. Mr Boutros Boutros-Ghali has addressed this mandate with vision and vigour, and we wish him well. We may still have to wait for decades before we realise the fruits of peace in its positive sense of development, prosperity and affulence for all, but we are convinced that the United Nations can contribute to this in abundant measure.

I recall, Mr Chairman, your observation in your work on the "Fundamentals of Javanese Culture" that "a family is good when its members are good; a family cannot be good when its members are bad". Certainly, within the fraternity of our Movement there may be differences between individual members. But above it all, and through it all, the good has endured: the good of a Movement sustained by a vision which History has made more attainable: the good of a Movement strengthened by the concerns of millions for a complete and happy life. So the Movement moves on, mainly because it concentrates on global issues and raises the combined voice of humankind, rather than frittering away its energies in bilateral disputes within itself which would have spelt disaster to its very existence long ago.

Is it possible then, for this family to agree to unleash the full force and vigour of its energy to the pervasive problems that beset us all? Can we agree to put aside vexed and contentious issues while we attend to first things first? If each one of us were to make a resolve to this effect, the resources and energy so conserved could bring us much nearer to the fulfilment of our Movement's true mission and mandate, that of assuring each individual within its fold a life that is free, worthwhile and productive, a true celebration of joy and dignity. ■

(Jakarta, September 2, 1992)

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Tackling Jharkhand ● *Restructuring Rajya Sabha*

Mainstream

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POLITICAL NOTEBOOK

The New Burden

The latest 18 per cent hike in the prices of all petroleum products, barring kerosene for domestic use, might raise an additional resource of Rs 1200 crores as part of the government's effort to meet the deficit in the oil pool account; but it is bound to substantially add to the heavy burden the consumers are already experiencing as a result of the allround price rise in the last few months.

Among the compulsions for the hike—this is the fourth time the government has resorted to such a hefty increase in the prices of petroleum products in less than three years since 1989—is the pressure on the Finance Minister to go in for full convertibility of the rupee on the trade account at the earliest. The Rangarajan Committee reviewing this issue had pointed out that full convertibility was not possible without introducing free pricing of petroleum products and fertilisers.

Furthermore, the breakdown of oil supplies from Russia prompted the government to announce the hike at this juncture.

What cannot, however, be overlooked is the significance that is being attached to the fact that this announcement came shortly after the Finance Minister's departure for Washington for the final round of negotiations with the IMF for a 2.2 billion dollar additional tranche of aid in view of the prevailing condition of our economy. None can be oblivious of the persisting, and quite open, pressure the IMF exerted on the government to bring about allout increase in prices of petroleum products as well as the abolition of subsidies on not only fertilisers but petroleum products like liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and kerosene as well.

Indeed, one cannot but link the latest hike to the new economic strategy of the government based on the Fund-Bank directives. The 1992 Annual Report of the IMF is a clear evidence of the Fund's wanton imposition of the Structural Adjustment Programme without any concern for the debilitating effects it would have on the developing economies in the medium term in particular. The heartlessness and insensitivity of the Fund approach to the plight of the poor is so blatant that even a person like Boris Yeltsin, the Russian head of state, who is enamoured of anything coming from the West—and in particular the US—was only the other day constrained to demarcate his economic course from that suggested by the IMF (for the purpose of preserving, in some form or the other, the social protection system in erstwhile USSR).

Nevertheless, the latest government announcement of hike in the prices of petroleum products should not come as any surprise especially when the economic whizz-kids in charge of the North Block—with the benign indulgence of the South Block administrators—have decided that the Fund-Bank prescription alone is the answer to the country's economic malaise and any endeavour to search for a viable alternative to it is an exercise in futility.

The step, therefore, is on expected lines and its long-term consequences too should not be difficult to predict.

September 16 *S.C.*

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COMMENTARY

Broadening Ties

India and Vietnam have always enjoyed a warm and cordial bilateral relationship. This relationship has not been one of convenience but is based on shared values and commitment to peace and independence of all nations.

Hostile imperialists and unfriendly neighbours left their pugmarks on the soil of Vietnam adding to its woes. Yet despite its economic underdevelopment Vietnam stood firm as a rock, fought valiantly and safeguarded its honour and self-respect by not bowing to the colonial and imperialist powers.

India stood by Vietnam in all its trials and tribulations. During the savage US assaults on the tiny Indo-Chinese country's sovereignty it did not hesitate to call a spade a spade. When the beautiful land of the Khmers, Cambodia, was ravaged and turned into killing fields, Vietnam sent its troops to liberate the populace there from the Pol Pot yoke. The Cold War parameters prevailing then resulted in attempts to ostracise Vietnam and Cambodia (that had its rebirth after the Khmer Rouge fled Phnom Penh). But the Government of India did not have any ambiguity in embracing both the countries in the name of justice, stability and peace.

The recent six-day visit of Do Muoi, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam, has further cemented Indo-Vietnamese ties. In fact the indepth talks between the Vietnamese leader and Prime Minster P.V. Narasimha Rao led to the decision to promote economic cooperation in wider areas. Significantly, both countries while noting the progress already achieved the economic, trade, scientific, technical and cultur cooperation have decided to shortly finalise an air servic agreement, an agreement on avoidance of double taxation an a memorandum of understanding for cooperation in agricultur research and training. What is more, India agreed to earmark th interest accruing on the old credit to Vietnam—about Rs 3 crores—for payment of Hanoi's exports to India. Rice happen to be one of the principal export items from Vietnam.

No less important are the shared perceptions on the politic front. On Cambodia both expressed concern over the late Khmer Rouge activities to sabotage the Paris Agreement. O Kashmir and Afghanistan too the two sides' views found strikin similarity of approach. This was evident in the attitude to nucle non-proliferation and disarmament with Vietnam commendin the Indian Action Plan, tabled at the special UN session on disarm ment in 1988, for a nuclear weapons-free world by the year 201

Also noteworthy was the fact that while conveying kee ness to improve their ties with China, the Vietnamese leade were realistic enough to rule out the restoration of the Sino-Vie namese alliance relationship of the bygone days. Beijing's move to occupy the Spratley islands were clear evidence of the absenc of any such possibility. However, the Vietnamese leaders' cand admission of the reality reflected once more Vietnam's fier independence of judgement and action which has earne worldwide respect in general and that of Indians in particular

September 16 *K. Elangova*

Need for a New States' Reorganisation Commissio

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

Was S.B. Chavan really at fault? His off-the-cuff observations at Pune that the Jharkhand problem might require the granting of Statehood or the Union Territory status to the region, has drawn a lot of flak from the leaders of all major political parties including his own.

Perhaps the Home Minister of India is not permitted to think aloud. He has to reconcile himself to the straitjacket of his exalted office. But anybody who cares to look beyond the compulsions of day-to-day politics will have to concede that what Chavan said is indicative of what has ultimately to be done in dealing with the Jharkhand question.

Everybody has reacted along expected lines. Everyone of the party leaders is concerned about keeping his flock together because it is an open secret that there are sharp differences of opinion in every party over the issue—some may have come out in the open as could be seen in the case of the Congress in Bihar; others may have been able to manage so far to keep their differences away from the public.

The Jharkhand region, the central homeland of the adiva tribal people, acknowledged to be the oldest inhabitants of th ancient land, is spread across the boundaries of four States- Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Bengal. It is not, ther fore, a Bihar problem as such, though one has to concede th the main base of the movement for the adivasi homeland, th is, Jharkhand, is situated in Bihar with the epicentre at Ranc Both in Madhya Pradesh and Orissa, the map of the futu Jharkhand cuts into substantial chunks of territory of th existing States; the portion claimed from West Bengal is com paratively less, though it is important in terms of the natur wealth drawn from that area.

It is worth recalling that after the first general elections i 1952, the Congress had to depend on the support of fi Jharkhand MLAs to ensure a majority for itself in the Oris Assembly to retain office in the State, and the deal that it ha to strike with the then leader of the Jharkhand Party, Jaip Singh, was quite unconventional by the standards of flo management prevailing in those adolescent days of our parliamentary politics. The Bihar Chief Minister, Laloo Prasad Yadav, may check up with profit how his Orissa predecessor in office managed this issue forty years ago. He may tell his Congress critics that he has been drawing inspiration from the precedent left behind by his Congress predecessor in Orissa.

This adivasi belt presents perhaps the most striking anomaly of India's political map. Here is a sprawling population left in the most primitive condition of tribal economy, while the rich natural wealth of the region is being exploited for the benefit of the entire country. The land is endowed with coal, iron ore, manganese, copper, mica, apart from the dense forest wealth, one of the richest in the entire subcontinent. One has to reflect upon the shattering psychological impact that the super-imposition of modern industrial economy and culture on the population living in primordial conditions. It is no accident that the political awakening for a Jharkhand identity should gather momentum in step with the mushrooming of industrial centres in the region in the last three decades. Obviously, the Jharkhand movement has sprouted outside the catchment area of mainstream politics of our country. This to a large measure accounts for its unacceptability uptil now in the conventional spectrum of Indian politics today.

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APART from this lack of rapport between the Jharkhand movement and the major political parties, there are two other reasons why the very idea of a separate State or Union Territory for the Jharkhand region is being stubbornly opposed by the Chief Ministers of all the concerned States. For one thing, the leadership of no State of the Indian Union is today prepared to part with a single square kilometre of territory, and the Jharkhand involves the cessation of a fairly huge mass of territory from all the four neighboring States: it becomes an almost superhuman task for any Chief Minister to voluntarily agree to do so; they may be feeling with good reason that such an operation would be exploited by their opponents as a surrender.

The second reason for their resistance—and this is the more important one—is that the adivasi belt fetches handsome revenue for the exchequer of these States by way of royalty on the mineral extraction including coal, also from timber from the forests and other items such as tenduleaf, apart from the deals struck between forest contractors and politicians of these States. All these factors linked with the current style of political functioning, come in the way of conventional political parties of the region responding to the just aspirations of the adivasis expressed through their urge for a Jharkhand State of their own.

In a sense, one gets the impression that the reluctance of these State Governments to consider the possibility of a Jharkhand State springs mainly from the fact that the adivasi belt in all of them is a thriving money-earner for them, and without this opening into the adivasi zone of the respective States they can hardly expect to balance their own budgets. Bihar, for instance, would become an economically backward State if it is confined to north Bihar where no industry has grown. The adivasi belt in Madhya Pradesh is a convenient milch-cow for the State Government. Orissa's economy depends to a significant measure on its retaining the adivasi belt. Only West Bengal can claim that the adivasi zone contributes marginally towards the State's economy. What is extraordinary is that while the economy of these States draw heavily on the adivasi belt, the State Governments concerned have done very little for the uplift of the tribal people in those areas. Which makes the case for an adivasi State all the more imperative.

The Union Home Minister's approach, however, has the touch of the run-of-the-mill politicking. His hint at Statehood or Union Territory status is directed only at South Bihar and does not touch the neighboring territories of Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and West Bengal. A principled stand to promote the interests of the adivasis and to meet their just demand enjoins upon the Central Government to acknowledge the necessity of setting up the Jharkhand State.

It could, of course, be argued that the Centre has not always adhered to any basic principle in setting up new States. Witness the creation of new States in the North-East, some of which are economically untenable. But these were set up largely because of political expediency. In contrast, a Jharkhand State, if run and properly managed, can become one of the richest States of the Indian Union. This, of course, will depend not only on the Centre taking the right approach towards the demand but on the calibre of the leadership that the adivasi movement itself will throw up in the meantime.

Judging by the furore touched off by the demand for an independent Jharkhand State, one has to take into account the political realities of the day. Placed as it is, with hardly a majority at its command in Parliament and its own party ranks divided over the issue—as also is the case with practically all other parties as well—it would be unrealistic to expect the Centre to meet the Jharkhand movement's demand without delay. What needs to be done is for the Centre to set up a fresh States' Reorganisation Commission, a move which no party can oppose. It is true that the Bihar Chief Minister has suggested this as a desperate bid to ward off the immediate demand for a separate State as raised by the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, which has rejected the idea of such a Commission. This is because the Jharkhand leaders suspect it as a diversionary move to paralyse the mounting momentum now gathering behind the demand for a separate State. Such misgivings can be dispelled by the Centre by so framing the terms of reference for the proposed Commission as to make it clear that in principle the Centre acknowledges the validity of the claim for a Jharkhand State, but at the same time wants to explore the possibility of realising it by taking into account the interests and perceptions of the neighboring States.

There is urgent need otherwise also for a fresh look at States' reorganisation pattern worked out three-and-a-half decades ago. The setting up of a separate Uttarakhand is already part of the official platform of the ruling BJP in Uttar Pradesh. Vidarbha has a fairly strong case for a separate State and so are some of the developed regions of Madhya Pradesh. There is no earthly reason why the Centre should fight shy of setting up a new States' Reorganisation Commission. It will have to decide the issue without delay. Any dilatoriness on this score may inflict grievous injury to the nation's unity and integrity. ■

Are We Embracing Colonialism?

AMIYA RAO

IN Delhi this August has been a month of holidays, celebrations and remembrances. Those who were no more were offered *shraddhanjalies* and those who are still with us were honoured for their courageous past in the 'Quit India' movement. Interestingly, *shraddhanjalies* were offered only to ex-Prime Ministers and to select Presidents, and as a routine to Mahatma Gandhi. It was purely a Delhi show performed by the elite for the elite. Common people as such, who one should have thought are as much a part of the nation as the affluent elite, were scrupulously kept back by the security forces and were not allowed to take any part—not even as mute spectators—in the August celebrations; it looked as if this country belonged to those august few and to their invited guests. This might explain why people's men like JP or Rammanohar Lohia were not mentioned even casually. Interestingly again, there was no reference to our first President, Dr Rajendra Prasad, or to the other distinguished President, Dr Radhakrishnan, not to mention India's great men like Tagore, Lala Lajpat Rai, Subhas Chandra Bose or Satyajit Ray, to name just a few. If this is how India is going to be integrated we shall have to wait for centuries. One wonders if the President could fly to Tirupati for a thanksgiving ceremony to the deity without any visible harm to his health, could he not have flown to Bengal and to Punjab to pay homage to Tagore, Subhas Chandra Bose and to Lala Lajpat Rai?

While one is not very certain if all who were offered *shraddhanjali* and honoured really deserved the tribute, one is certain that when the present elite who offered it and the departed who received it are long forgotten, the ones who had been left out will live on and be remembered as makers of India.

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OBSERVING these festive celebrations our mind goes back to those other forgotten ones—tens of thousands who in the early thirties in Bengal had sacrificed themselves for the people, so that all might breathe freely in an India which was free.

In the late twenties and early thirties Bengal had witnessed a fantastic struggle against the British rule; it was a youth struggle, student struggle, reckless and spontaneous, a totally fearless—maybe a romantic—struggle by thousands of young idealists; it was a movement not for name or fame, wealth or power. Disciplined and committed to the cause they believed in, they carried on their struggle. Patriotism? Misguided? Could be, as the wise men of Bengal used to feel, yet none disputed the fact that they were in the presence of love at its purest.

Though this movement was never properly highlighted—neither those days nor later when India became independent—the leaders of Congress having kept themselves at a very safe distance, it caused grave concern to the imperial power. Determined to crush the struggle which they were afraid was the beginning of revolution like the unholy one of 1857, they sent their most ruthless officer, Charles Tegart, as the Commissioner of Police in Calcutta. Tegart went about his job with unbelievable brutality; hundreds of youngsters were killed, tortured, maimed for life, hundreds just disappeared leaving no trace after they had been arrested. With almost religious fervour Tegart was exterminating the upstarts who dared stand up against their White masters. Yet in spite of such repression, the struggle continued and spread and the district of Midnapore became the storm-centre.

Seething with helpless anger, egged on with their own conception and vision of liberty, the young people of Midnapore found the District Magistrate's oppression intolerable. Arrests, merciless beatings, detentions for days on end of young college students, uninvolved in the movement, had become the order of the day; whoever was young, strong and athletic-looking began to be picked up by the police and the targets were invariably homes of the middle class. The youth of Midnapore found no solution to their problems following Gandhiji's *mantra* prevalent at that time; failing to understand the significance of the statement that "the longer the yarn, the *charkha* spins, the nearer comes *swaraj*", they rejected it and decided that the only remedy for savage terrorism was an answering terrorism equally savage. Thus before long violence broke out and took its own momentum like storm-lashed waves of a turbulent sea. And three District Magistrates of Midnapore one after the other, in quick succession, along with their living instruments of oppression—the police—began to be shot down. Hundreds of homes lost their sons and brothers, husbands and cousins.

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THAT was the time when the unnerved British imperialists sent another of their seasoned officers, Percival Griffiths, a worthy contemporary of Charles Tegart, as the District Magistrate of Midnapore to show the might of the British rule. He descended on Midnapore with hordes of armed and mounted police. Flag march was ordered right away; villages, big and small, were raided in search of the miscreants; punitive taxes were collected even from the poor assuming that they were the harbourers of the revolutionaries; men imported from Calcutta to be trained to give false evidence swarmed the towns like flies; and falsely implicated young students died inside interrogation centres subjected to third degree treatment. Secret police kept watch over government officials and their young sons and daughters had to report themselves at the nearest police station. All activities, even cultural activities, had been forbidden; anthologies of patriotic poems and songs, too dangerous to be kept at home, were burnt; singing of *Bande Mataram* was an offence. That is how Percival Griffiths ruled over Midnapore. And true to all racists he resigned from the Indian Civil Sevice a few years later, realising that the rule of the Raj was going to end and serving Indian masters would be intolerable.

Percival Griffiths was not shot down, he died in bed at the ripe old age of 92. One of our English dailies has in a glowing obituary called him "the bravest man in Bengal"; it has mentioned his "courage and integrity" and how he "firmly dealt with crime" yet "showed his goodwill by seeking a constructive answer to disaffection". Another of our Bengali dailies "of the largest circulation" has suggested that Charles Tegart should be the model for the new Police Commissioner in Bengal. Possibly, as AM says: "We are either at the end of history or history has decided to trudge backwards" but those criminals whom Griffiths had "firmly delat with" and on whom he had showered a good measure of his "goodwill" have entered the realm of Bengal's legends becoming a part of her history. ■

Reform of Financial Sector after the Scam

ARUN GHOSH

The other day a journalist rang me up to "interview" me on the phone on the recent stock market scam. My answer to him was simple. One should draw a clear line of distinction between "fraud" and the "scam"—or the speculative, unhealthy and unrealistic increase in share prices that makes the stock exchanges in India operate (in the words of none other than John Maynard Keynes) in the manner of a "casino". Proposals for bank reform should, in fact, cover the entire financial sector, including the stock exchanges.

What is the "scam" due to? The "scam"—in terms of the purely speculative transactions in the stock market — has been building up for quite some time, as a consequence of two sets of forces: first, the desire of a few major operators — and these are some large corporate bodies — wanting to float new issues at a very high premium, not justified by the earnings potential of the proposed investment but which would become justified if the market premia on existing shares were very high; and secondly, the desire of the Indian Government to intervene and keep the bullish trend in the stock market. This point needs an explanation.

To go back to the distinction between "fraud" and the "scam" proper, the former is a matter for the police — in this instance, the CBI—to investigate and to take corrective action and should be dealt with as such. If someone issues duplicate Bankers' Receipts (BRs) without the backing of any securities, as happened on a large scale, that is a clear case of "fraud". Fraud can occur in any walk of life. In the present instance, the "fraud" prolonged the agony of the scam, but the causes of the scam were different. If investigative journalists, or for that matter the JPC want the stock exchanges in India to perform the function that they are supposed to, namely, to mediate the investment of householding savings in new equity so as to promote the healthy growth of corporate enterprise, two types of analytical effort would be required. First, one would need to go into the major weakenesses of the present system; and secondly, one would need to go into the rationale behind the "scam", and then, change the ground rules which involve better disclosure norms, greater openness, and the prevention of pure speculation from taking over the operations of the financial sector.

In the above context, one is somewhat surprised by the statement of the Finance Minister that "India's financial system will emerge stronger and healthier in the wake of the securities scam, which is an accumulated by-product of the weakening of internal control mechanism in the banks". (*The Economic Times*, New Delhi, August (24, 1992) The questions which the Finance Minister should address are : Was the boom in stock prices in 1991-92 healthy? Was it justified?

The Indian stock market has been booming since the late eighties. Let us, in this context, take a look at the role and depth of the stock exchanges. How many companies' shares are listed in the most prestigious, the most active of the stock exchanges, namely, the Bombay Stock Exchange? One is not sure of the exact number, but those actively traded are only 800. In other words, the stock exchanges are used, have been used for quite some time, by only a few corporate giants for mopping up the the savings of the community for new investments/expansion schemes.

And why have the stock exchanges been booming since the late eighties? Market confidence in the economy is the least important of the factors, for the "market" here has been dominated by the UTI, the various Mutual Funds (set up by a number of nationalised banks), the financial institutions. The government (and the financial institutions) have not been very forthcoming in the total amount of "equity" holding by these institutions; even the overall figures of institutional holding of the total equity of companies traded in say, the BSE, are

Dr Ghosh is a former Member of the Planning Commission.

not available. Not even annually, in a source like the Currency and Finance Report of the RBI. And yet, by all accounts, the "big bull" in the market has been the UTI, for quite some time.

A third factor leading to the "scam"—and I define the "scam" as unhealthy, speculative increase in stock prices without any basis or justification—has been the slow response of the government to the need for "immobilising" the cash suddenly generated by a large number of "tax-free bonds" floated by a number of public sector enterprises (PSEs). A tax-free bond of 9-10 per cent would give an effective "after tax" return of 18-20 per cent or more (if the surcharge is taken into consideration). The *Indira Vikas Patra*—introduced by N.D. Tiwari in the mid-eighties—would have become encashable bearer bonds by the late nineties. All this meant a tremendous increase in "liquidity" in the financial market from the late eighties onwards. Neither the government nor the Reserve Bank had the foresight to "immobilise" these surplus funds; for some of the PSEs issuing bonds required the funds over a period of time, not immediately. It made sense for the PSEs to entrust these funds to banks under their Portfolio Management Schemes. Naturally, this process made available enormous surplus cash to the financial institutions and the banks. *Raising of the interest rate was not the answer to this problem;* in fact, it had the effect of reducing new investments, with a large amount of cash floating around, looking for placement.

In the bleak year of 1991-92, the raising of the interest rate was thus a sure fire method of increasing speculative activity. And nothing was done by the government to regulate the functioning of the stock markets; and nothing was done by the Reserve Bank of India to "immobilise" the overhang of excess liquidity in the system. If anything, all the policies introduced with the Budget—the complete exemption of the wealth tax for wealth held in the form of financial assets, the reduction in the Capital Gains Tax, the reduction of the income tax for higher income brackets—were calculated to give a boost to the capital market.

Here was a queer scenario: there was a squeeze on industrial production through a hike in commercial bank lending rates; there was a recession in demand arising from sharp cutbacks in government investment in infrastructure; there was already an overhang of excess liquidity; and the government chose to impart a big stimulus to the holding of corporate stock. More importantly, the government issued a directive to the banks to increase their dividends by 50 per cent in 1992-93.

Note the scenario. The was *no* positive stimulus to real investment in the economy, obviously as part of the stabilisation programme. And yet, there was a positive stimulus given to the stock market, which was limited to dealing in a very few large companies' shares and debenture issues. The banks were *pushed* by none other than the GOI to speculative activity.

The "scam", therefore, leads to two questions: one, pertaining to the relationship between the "brokers" and the corporate tycoons who were about to issue new equity at high premia; and two, the nexus between the government's policies and the concerned corporate sector giants. I am not referring to the possible nexus between people in the government and the corporate sector. But note the feeling of satisfaction publicly expressed by members of the Union Council of Ministers at the buoyancy in the stock market, as a clear evidence of the success of the government's liberalisation policies. Note further that the scam involves the National Housing Bank, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Reserve Bank of India, set up to promote housing for the weaker sections of the population.

Financial Reform

As far back as June 1987, Bhabatosh Datta (Professor Emeritus of the prestigious Presidency College, Calcutta) wrote an article on "Capital Market or Casino". (See, Datta, *Indian Planning at the Crossroads,* Oxford University Press, 1992) Therein he noted the unhealthy boom in stock prices then (in the summer of 1987), and made several very perceptive remarks and recommendations. First, he recommended "a strict prohibition of sales and purchases (of corporate shares, bonds, etc.) involving time,... there must not be any post-dated commitments". Second, "a further step necessary for stopping speculation in shares will be to prescribe that no one who has acquired a share by spot purchase at the stock exchange will be allowed to sell, gift or mortgage his share within two years of acquisition". This would purport, in brief, to make the stock exchanges a place for genuine mediation of household savings for long-term corporate investment, ruling out speculative activity in shares. Finally, Datta strongly commended a proposal of the then Chairman of the State Bank of India for "across-the-counter sales of stocks, bonds and debentures" by banks, their subsidiaries and affiliates, for "many banks, including State Bank, now have either merchant banking departments or subsidiaries". According to Datta, if a 'lock-in' period for shares acquired is enforced "commercial banks can enter the field... without leaving everything to coterie managed stock exchanges ineffectively controlled by the government through a maze of conflicting notifications".

A lot of other reforms is necessary. K.T. Gosalia has written on the issue of "Tackling Insider Trading" (*The Economic Times*, New Delhi, August 24, 1992), the main issue being the frequency and scale of disclosure requirements of "listed" companies. Indeed, it is unfortunate in this context that the Company Law has of late been amended to allow the publication (annually) of "abridged" balance sheets—in the interest of economy—when the same companies are issuing balance-sheets in glossy, multicoloured paper with many irrelevant photographs and publicity, without giving detailed information as to the functioning and operations of the company. The "scam" and the muleting of the unsuspecting public can be traced to the government's economic policies. Deregulation does *not* mean that the government should dispense with the minimum requirements of "accountability" of the corporate bodies.

Finally, one should go back to Bhabatosh Datta (*op.cit.*) for a quotation from none other than John Maynard Keynes (who, incidentally, made a lot of money on the stock exchange for himself for the King's College, Cambridge, and for the insurance company the affairs of which he managed):

> Speculators may do no harm as bubbles on a steady stream of enterprise. But the position is serious when enterprise becomes the bubble or the whirlpool of speculation. When the capital development of the country becomes the byproduct of the activities of a casino, the job is likely to be ill-done.

Our monetary authorities today appear to have forgotten these basic precepts of the healthy development of capitalist enterprise; even pure speculation is now to be lauded if it makes, the ongoing policies look good. The shenanigans of an unbridled financial market need not be curbed; they are to be further stimulated.

That, in truth, is the problem today. Fraud is certainly to be prevented, but we must first remove the causes which led to the perpetration of fraud. How could the authorities be so complacent about a stock market boom which was clearly speculative? ■

Restructuring the Rajya Sabha

AMRIK SINGH

Of the various infirmities from which our Constitution now suffers, perhaps none is more crippling than the faulty balance as between the Centre and the States. Even though some people have reservations on this score, opinion has been steadily veering around to the view that unless this imbalance is corrected, we cannot be said to have learnt from experience.

While this imbalance is evident in a number of respects, perhaps no other feature of the Constitution underlines it so tellingly as the composition of the Rajya Sabha. Looking through all the documents available on the subject, what stands out sharply is that while there was a debate on almost every other issue of the composition of the Rajya Sabha, the one thing that could have ensured the right balance between the Centre and the States was not given anything more than passing attention. The only person who proposed that all States should be equally represented in the Council of States was K.T. Shah. Hardly anyone took notice of his proposal and it was killed, so to-speak, more through indifference than a decision against it.

A good deal of time was spent on other issues like whether there should be a second Chamber at all or not, how it should be constituted, whether the system of proportional representation be made applicable in this case or not, should people be nominated or not, if nominated, how many and of what kind, should there be an expert body to advise the Rajya Sabha and so on. Dozens of issues were raised but the one issue that was not raised with any degree of concern or commitment was whether the different States should have equal representation or not. There were two important reasons why this dimension of the problem was not given the attention that ought to have been given to it.

One was the absence of a historical tradition. Despite some interesting and innovative features of the Constitution, its basic structure is based on the 1935 Government of India Act. Strictly speaking, that Act had visualised a Federation, and had it been brought into existence, there would have been some kind of a precedent to build upon. Only one part of it dealing with the provinces (as the States were known then) was implemented in 1935. The other part dealing with the induction of the princely States into the Federation was kept in abeyance. Once the War started, the proposal was formally deferred and when the process of Constitution-making was first undertaken in late 1946, there was no model to follow.

The second reason which flows from the first one is the simple fact that when the transfer of power took place, there were several hundred princely states. How to deal with them in the new Constitution was a critical issue. Fairly early in the process of Constitution-making, it was suggested by N. Gopalaswamy Ayyangar that in terms of proportions, the princely states may be given 40 per cent representation. This was agreed to more or less by general consent. How the further division was to be carried out was a matter that remained fluid for the reason that the states were being merged into one another and the landscape of princely India was undergoing a rapid change. By the time the exercise of drawing up the Constitution was completed, the situation had not only been brought under control but largely rationalised.

Dr Amrik Singh is an eminent educationist and a former Vice-Chancellor of the Punjabi University, Patiala.

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THE significance of this development is that when the Constitution was being drafted, the situation in respect of princely India was in a flux. As such it was not possible to take firm decisions. In his Memorandum on the Union Constitution prepared by Sir B.N. Rau, the issue is put in the following words:

> I have not attempted to give all the Units equal representation in the Senate (as the Rajya Sabha was then known), because under present conditions this might mean that the provincial representatives, or to use a convenient term, the British Indian representatives would be swamped by the representatives of the States. It should be remembered that there are 35 potential Indian States units in the Union and at present there are only 11 British Indian Units excluding Chief Commissioners' provinces....

This memorandum was prepared in October 1947 and speaks for itself. The heterogeneous character of the princely states and their large number together with the relatively small number of the Indian provinces at that time more or less ensured that the question of parity as between different States was, properly speaking, not on the agenda.

Equally important, however, was the historical dimension referred to already. The most successful federal country in the world is the USA. When that country drafted its Constitution, it was nine independent American States that came together. In other words, the historical circumstances were such that the federation, even when formed, could not have had that kind of a dominant position which would have led to the emasculation of the various States. In India the situation was different. To have made the Constitution truly federal in character, an extraordinary leap of imagination was required and the records available from that period go to indicate that this was not forthcoming.

On the contrary, there was an ongoing battle for supremacy between the Hindus and the Muslims and the manner in which the battle had developed and the critical situation in which the country found itself during the years 1946-47, made the existing shape of things more or less uncertain. Unavoidable in the first phase, there was an attempt to delegate more powers to the Union so that the Muslim League could be persuaded to come into the Union. When, in the second phase, the partition of the country became a *fait accompli*, there was

an emphatic movement in the opposite direction. As is widely recognised, the Constitution as it obtains now is the outcome of that cast of mind.

II

IS the notion of the parity of States with one another a feasible proposition? Quite a number of people argue that it is all very well to talk of it but it just cannot be done. Not only is there the weight of the past tradition behind the existing arrangement, meanwhile, the North-East of India has been split into half a dozen States. Some of them were not even one million strong. How is it possible for a State with such a small population to be equated with say, UP which has about one-sixth of India's population? The objection is valid to some extent. But if we accept the proposition that no change is possible or feasible, what we are really saying is that the *status quo* should continue. If the *status quo* is to continue, it is no use discussing the issue. It is sought to be discussed precisely because the *status quo* is found to be unsatisfactory.

In order to understand this issue in the right perspective, two prior issues have to be gone into. One is the working of the Constitution during the last four decades or so. The second one is what is our understanding of the Indian polity. If it becomes evident that we have misjudged the essential movement of the Indian polity during the last few decades, it would stand to reason that steps have to be devised to evolve a different constitutional structure. As a part of that new restructuring one can also take up the issue of how the Rajya Sabha is to be reconstituted.

To take up the first issue of how the Constitution has worked over the year, it would be advisable to divide the last few decades into three broadly identifiable divisions. The first phase more or less synchronised with the Nehruvian period in Indian politics. It may be described in these words: problems were there but they did not come to surface except in passing.

For instance, the first major communal riot after 1947 took place in 1961 in Jabalpore. It was in response to that riot that Nehru set up the National Integration Council. That it was a totally inadequate response to the problem has become clear over the years. It is also equally clear that the basic problems which had remained hidden from view did exist though it took them some time to find expression. The Jabalpore riot was one symptom of the deeper malaise and there were several others also which need not be dwelt upon.

The next phase synchronised more or less with the first phase of Indira Gandhi's tenure. Under her stewardship, the bias in favour of centralised control from Delhi became markedly pronounced. In her vision of India, it was the Centre which mattered. What the States had to do was to conform to that larger pattern. Simultaneously, she stabilised her hegemony in the political sphere also. Not only did she subordinate the party to her will, all decision-making in the party got personalised. Elections were done away with and the party became so subservient to her that she appointed and dismissed Chief Ministers as she pleased. No more need be said about some of the other developments in this period.

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IN the period after her return to power in 1980, (the third phase) the strains of over-centralisation became much too visible. Though the DMK had been straining at the leash, it was the Akalis who took the first decisive step to pose a challenge. In 1973 they adopted the Anandpur Saheb Resolution. Five years later they redefined it further by advocating that the Centre should exercise only four powers—defence, foreign affairs, currency and communications and everything else should belong to the State sector. In the wake of those demands came the Akali agitation. In order to deal with the various pressures on the polity, it was in the early eighties that she appointed what came to be known as the Sarkaria Commission.

Not much came out of its recommendations. Not only did the Commission not suggest any radical break with the existing set-up, most of them have not been acted upon in a substantive way. During these years, however, the strain on the polity had become more or less intolerable. Soon after Punjab came Kashmir and then Assam.

Out of these various challenges to the federal polity, the most serious is that of Kashmir. This is for the simple reason that Pakistan is a strong contender for the incorporation of Kashmir into Pakistan. This is not acceptable to India. For over four decades, a contest has gone on between the two countries. Without going into the details of what happened, and the on-and-off character of the contest, since 1989 Kashmir has been held only by the army. The people by and large are against India.

How is that problem going to be resolved ? As anyone can see, it will not be resolved short of guaranteeing total and complete autonomy to that State. If it is conceded to Kashmir, Punjab cannot be far behind. If it is conceded to both Kashmir and Punjab, can any one say with any show of reason that the same status is denied to other States? In plain words, what is today called national integration is under severe jeopardy. While other factors are also responsible for it, perhaps the most decisive factor is the over-centralised manner in which the country has been run for over four decades.

More and more people are beginning to recognise the untenability of this arrangement. However, at the same time it must be acknowledged that the dominant political parties have not yet come around to the view that the polity be restructured. The biggest of them, the Indian National Congress, continues to function as if what is happening is of no concern to it.

This ostrich-like attitude cannot last long. Sooner or later the issue would have to be confronted. Once that happens, each political party would have to redefine its attitude. In any event a restructuring of relationships between the Centre and the States is very much on the agenda. In what precise manner a new arrangement is worked out remains to be seen. But of this there should be no doubt that a new arrangement would have to be worked out.

III

HAVING dealt with this issue, it is equally important to study the evolution of Indian polity during the last few decades. Till recently, a very large number of people had the image of the nation-state in front of them. Their model was some of the European countries as they evolved towards nationhood in the post-Reformation period. Countries like Germany, France, Italy, etc. did conform to this model though the Central European countries belong to another category and, as to Russia, it was a category by itself. Spain and Portugal conform to this pattern to some extent though there were other factors at work which left them out of count somehow.

The model of these European nation-states looms large on the horizon for those who believe in a strong centre. The notion of one-nation-one language was also a part of this political syndrome. While those who project Hindi as the national language of India felt obliged to work out a compromise in the Constituent Assembly, the cast of thinking characterising that mindset could not get away from its original hankering after a one-nation-one language State.

That was not the only unsettling factor. The ethnic urges of people in different regions of the country also gradually manifested themselves. One evidence of it was seen in the re-organisation of States in the mid-fifties. While in the case of South India the problem was sorted out in the first round, in the case of Gujarat and Maharashtra it continued to foster for a couple of years more. In the case of Punjab, it survived even into the sixties and was decided as late as 1966.

But can it be said that the problem has been settled? Anyone who makes such a claim is not in touch with the reality. In States like Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and UP and several others, regional problems continue to simmer. In Maharashtra, for example, there is a strong demand for a separate Konkan State as also Vidarbha. Many more things can be said in this vein in regard to Maharashtra as also a number of other States.

In respect of most of these matters, the issues are likley to come to a head within the next decade or so. The moment any attempt is made to settle Kashmir and other problems, there would be a quickening of political activity. In plain words, while the linguistic map of India was redrawn in the fifties and the sixties, the ethnic map of India is yet to be redrawn. When precisely this is done is something that cannot be anticipated.

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WHAT would happen when such a map is redrawn? Likely enough UP would be split into several parts; so would be Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and several other States. Even Andhra can further split. The process of re-demarcation is never a simple one. It is always messy, occasionally bloody and, to quite an extent, much more wasteful of human energy and resources than it need be. Would it not be an act of wisdom to look at this problem with a fresh mind and non-partisan eyes? But then this is not being realistic. Wisdom is a scarce commodity in politics. Things happen in politics in accordance with a rhythm of their own and more often the process is destructive rather than constructive.

While this is true, it needs to be added that the situation in Kashmir and Punjab, as also the Assam situation to some extent, are acute enough not to admit any further delay or postponement. Whatever delay has occurred already has served to escalate these problems. The right thing to do would have been to intervene in good time and not allow the situation to get aggravated. But the bankruptcy of political leadership in almost each one of the major parties is so unmitigated that we have allowed things to come to this pass.

It must be said to the credit of the BJP that it has consistently expressed itself in favour of smaller States though it must also be added that it believes in a strong Centre. In respect of small States, the BJP has not really concretised its ideas. What it has been saying is more or less in general terms.

Regarless of the BJP position, the issue of the restructuring of powers as between the Centre and the States is unavoidable. And so is the issue of the ethinic reorganisation of the States. If these two processes working side by side can be taken care of more or less simultaneously, the country would be in a position to deal with a whole range of problems. Restructuring the Rajya Sabha in that case would be one of the several things that would require to be done.

If what has been suggested above has any substance or validity, the oft-quoted argument of the possible parity of the North-East Indian States with several of the other major States will come to be seen in a different light. In other words, what looks insuperable today would not look so insuperable then.

To go on to suggest that by itself this issue would have to be taken care of once the polity is reorganised would not be to say everything. At the same time it must be acknowledged that in doing so we would have taken a major step forward in the direction we ought to have taken in the first instance. But given the circumstances of 1947-49, we could not have done so.

It is not necessary to recall what was stated above except to add that what was done during those two years of Constitution-making was more or less in terms of the situation prevailing then. The last few decades have shown convincingly that the situation has changed. And now that it has changed, it is time to recognise the nature of that change and, in consequence, move towards restructuring the polity.

IV

ONE final word in regard to the experience of two countries which are large-sized and about which we know a little more than others partly because they both are English-speaking. The US experience is too well known to be commented upon in any detail. Not only does the Senate represent all the States in an equal measure (regardless of how large they are in size or population), in its actual working the Senate wields much more power than the other House as has been widely noted. Sir B.N. Rau has quoted Loss-Smith from his book *Second Chambers* to the effect that the US Senate is "the only example in the world of a Second Chamber that is incontestably more powerful than the first."?

Apart from exercising more power than the other House, there are certain jobs which are handled only by the Senate. For example, any kind of a treaty with a foreign country has to be approved by this body. Declaration of war is also subject to ratification by this body. In regard to the selection of judges, ambassadors and several other posts the Senate has such a powerful say that the executive is quite often on the defensive. In fact some people are of the view that the Senate should not wield as much power as it wields today.

Going by the doctrine of the division of powers as between the legislature, the executive and the judiciary, there is a strong school of thought which feels that the Senate needs to be defanged somewhat. Be that as it may, the fact remains that the Senate is a very powerful body and has such a decisive share in the running of the country that it is not the House of Representatives so much as the Senate which really calls the shots. Would it be too much to say that it is this fact, more than any other fact, which has made the US into a truly federal country?

In regard to Australia, every province has the same number of members in the Senate. In terms of its reach and power, however, the Australian Senate does not wield as much power as the American Senate does. Yet the very fact that the Senate is constituted on an equal basis and wields considerable power has ensured that the country moves, on the whole, on an even keel.

While there are a couple of other models also which do not exactly conform to these two models, those are not being referred to here for the simple reason that the model of an Upper House which represents the States (as the Council of States was known then, to use the pre-1947 phraseology), which is of decisive significance as far as our country is concerned.

Ours is a multi-national, multi-lingual, multi-ethnic country. Even if some people have reservations about these various shades of description, it can be no one's contention that India is like a European nation-state. Diversity is very much a part of our ethos. That being so, it has to be given due accommodation. When one talks of restructuring the Rajya Sabha, it is in order to take account of these diversities and evolve a polity which is not subject to these unsettling pressures to which it is subjected today. ■

MUSINGS

Face of Regional Journalism

MRINAL PANDE

"You should be happy that your Hindi journalism is flourishing," a fellow English language journalist said to me recently in a playful manner. And added, with a certain envy, "Your Hindi allies are bringing out new regional editions almost each week. There has to be good money in it. And, of course, there is all that patronage from your cow-belt politicians."

Yes, there is good money in regional journalism in Hindi now. But it is there mainly for the owner editors not the average mofussil journalist. And yes, there is political patronage available, but it is only for the user-friendly journalist. The professionally objective ones, who cannot be relied upon to take sides and plant stories, soon find themselves redundant in this scene.

During a recent visit to the Uttarakhand region, I chanced to meet a small group of young and old journalists. Conversations with them revealed the real and slimy underbelly of regional journalism today, a reality that not only readers but also most metro-based journalists, like my friend above, know little about.

The backbone of regional journalism is the mofussil journalist who belongs to the region and has a fairly close access to the ground-reality there. But, as an ex-bureau chief of a major Hindi daily said, our mofussil journalist is a car that the owners expect to run without petrol. The unpaid stranger is fast becoming a steady fixture on the regional scene in Hindi journalism. These omnipresent gentlemen (none of whom can show a formal letter of appointment) can be found all the time in the DM's office, in the PRO's cabin or the local MLA car. And they don't just contribute stories regularly but are also said to undertake work to boost the circulation and take in private and governmental advertising for their papers.

The obvious question is, what do they do that for? And the obvious answer is, for the clout and all its fringe benefits that direct access to precious media space can win a small town man in the mofussils today. Such a journalist not only offers guaranteed space to small town politicians and their poet-social activist-*mahila* club relatives, but he also (and more dangerously) routinely plants stories that obfuscate the real news, about the misdeeds of the liquor and flesh-trade mafia and the police and politicians of these areas.

The journalist I met quoted the case of one such "journalist" in whose house cases of poisonous *sura* were found by the police but the matter was soon hushed up. By allowing such people access to their papers, some of the owners of regional dailies and periodicals may have solved the age-old problem of how the regional papers are to support the large band of journalist stringers who are so necessary for culling news from far-flung areas for the regional editions. But, they have also, in one stroke, mauled and scarred hopelessly the face of regional journalism.

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FOR a young and ambitious Hindi language journalist in a mofussil town in India, the expansion of journalistic frontiers through regional editions of well-known dailies has been a mixed blessing. It gives him (very seldom her, but on that later) a chance to start communicating under conditions that are extremely favourable but also professionally somewhat unreal. Chances are that stories by a bright young man will be read and appreciated initially by major houses and eminent editors of eminent national dailies. He will also soon gain a responsive and usually vocally supportive readership but before long, he'll feel the pressure to fall in line.

The first to apprise him of his *aukat* (real status) might be the editor himself. I was shown a bunch of such letters received by some of these hapless, young correspondents from their editors, and they were all nasty without exception. Then there is the hostile news desk in the head office which his work has to pass through. If my young colleagues are to be believed the news desks today are liberally sprinkled with jealous and cynical old hands and some paid guardians of vested interes groups—the latter will never allow a damaging story agains their mentors to pass through but will hold back printing schedules to accommodate stories by their stooges.

In a period where scams and communal acts by anti-nationa groups are threatening the very fabric of our society and polity this state of affairs in a section of the print media with daily access to millions of minds, needs to be scrutinised and amended as soon as possible. This needs to be done not only so that truth may prevail but also so that young, honest and energetic voices from our mofussils may find media space to report in. Writing withou publishing, as somehow said, is like loving from far, deliciou for fantasies, but thin gruel for living. ■

The Muslim Vote

SEEMA MUSTAFA

Political perceptions have changed. And so has the Muslim vote bank. Once a formidable monolith, and the preserve of the Congress party, this vote bank can no longer be regarded as a bloc vote influenced as it is by local and regional factors. Having become resilient to populist slogans the Muslims, in any given area, have become far more discerning and as the last general elections in particular have proved, are no longer inclined to vote as a herd adhering to *fatwas* for any one party.

The Muslims' disenchantment with the Congress party began from the Emergency days, but even so when Indira Gandhi returned to power in 1980 she retained her hold over this sizeable electorate that saw no political alternative to the Congress party. Muslims supported her not as the messiah they had failed in the early 1970s but as the leader of a party wedded to their interests, at least more so, than the other Centrist configurations on the horizon. The gradual communalisation of the Congress-I under her, the communal riots during the period, the governmental apathy led to a distancing between the Muslim voter and the party that he had held to be his own since independence. After her death, the Muslim electorate, as affected as the rest of the country by the sympathy factor, voted *en bloc* for her son Rajiv Gandhi. Although an attempt was made by certain vested interests at the time to prove that Muslims had not voted for the Congress-I, this is not borne out by facts and the Rajiv Gandhi sweep reflected a consolidation of the Indian vote all over the country.

Came the historic Shah Bano judgement. And the government's decision to intervene at the instance of some 'Muslim leaders' was the turning point in the recent communal history of the country. Choosing to turn a deaf ear to the secular and liberal voice, the government sided with fundamentalists to overturn the Supreme Court judgement. The reaction set into motion a chain of events for which the country is still paying a price. The locks of the Ram Janmabhommi/Babri Masjid site were opened, *shilanyas* allowed, and the state turned into a willing partner of the obscurantist and fundamentalist forces set on wrecking the integrity and unity of India.

The final nail into Congress-I-Muslim relations was thus driven and it became clear that the Muslims had decided to severe links with the ruling party. This was again an *en bloc* decision, and transgressed regional barriers. No religious leaders were required. No *fatwas* needed to be issued. It was the independent decision of the man on the street who felt that his security was in peril as a direct result of the policies pursued by the Rajiv Gandhi Government. And this brings one to the next point, central to understanding the Muslim vote bank.

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MUSLIMS in India have not been looking for Muslim leaders. In fact the greatest Muslim leaders since independence were all non-Muslims—Gandhi, Nehru, Indira Gandhi for a while and V.P. Singh for a briefer duration. The Syed Shahabuddins and others of his ilk have failed to cut much ice with the Muslim electorate and despite their communal posturing have had to struggle to win their own elections from Muslim-dominated constituencies. Muslim organisations like the Jamaat-e-Islami have failed to acquire a mass base, and others like the Babri Masjid Action Committee formed to exploit the Ayodhya issue have been reduced to little cliques because of the Muslim electorate's indifferent response. When it comes to the question of security the average Muslim, regardless of the local *madrasa* or Masjid's position, is looking for a national credible alternative in which the fundamentalists of his community have no place. Unfortunately, the populist politics of recent years has failed to understand this or take it into account, and today there are Centrist parties insisting upon projecting communal Muslims, masquerading as custodians of Islam, as the spokesmen of the community. This attitude—regrettably has elicited a strong reaction from the majority community which sees in it as yet another example of 'pampering' minority fundamentalism. But more of this later.

The National Front and the Janata Dal came into the picture at just the right point of time. The Muslim electorate, looking for an alternative to the Congress-I, embraced this combine wholeheartedly and with much gusto. And translated the enthusiasm into votes in the next general elections. A North-South divide in the Muslims' perceptions was evident but not sufficient to indicate any real fragmentation of what had been for decades considered a 'vote bank'. The NF Government's stand on the Ayodhya issue endeared it to the Muslims and when the government fell after the withdrawal of the BJP support, V.P. Singh became the hero of the Muslim masses. But the adulation was not, as it would have been even a few years ago, converted into votes. The Muslim villager declaring: "We will vote for anything so long as it is V.P.Singh's" did not live up to his promise at the time of voting. And while in Bihar the Muslims joined the backwards in supporting Laloo Prasad Yadav, in Uttar Pradesh their decision was influenced entirely by local considerations as it was in most other States. Finally, the Muslim voter decided to remove the blindfold and make it clear that the 'vote bank' had matured into a discerning electorate.

The process has been hastened by the collapse of the Congress-I as a committed secular party, and the appearance of other conglomerations which for one reason or the other have captured the imagination or the goodwill of the Muslim masses in their search for a new idol. The pattern of voting in Uttar Pradesh in the last parliamentary elections can be taken as a case in point. The Muslim electorate, admittedly, was passionately behind the Janata Dal. But underlying the passion was an objective understanding of the ground reality, and an overriding preoccupation with the community's own safety. The Muslim electorate throughout the State, and in fact all over the country, was agreed that the BJP was the main enemy.

In UP the general consensus was to defeat the Congress-I as well which, in its perception, had conspired to strengthen the hands of the VHP and the BJP. But even here, in some constituencies where the Congress-I candidates (Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha), had succeeded in winning the minorities' confidence, the results even in Muslim strongholds indicated a pattern entirely different from the rest of the State. The candidates' past and present performance, the party's organisational strength and other such local factors were seen to influence the Muslim voter in making his choice. His heart was with the Janata Dal, or so he claimed and rather vociferously at that, but he cast his vote with his mind. He might have erred but by applying his mind showed that he had come of age. So the Muslim vote in the State was split between the Congress-I (marginally) and more so between the SJP and the Janata Dal, depending on the candidate fielded and the organisational strength of the party in question.

The message is clear – that the Muslim voter values his security above everything else and will vote for any party (except the BJP) which appears more stable, is more concerned with the minorities' safety in real terms and not populist gestures, and for candidates having the determination and strength to take on the BJP. Since no one party can lay claim to this position, this fragmented political structure necessarily means a fragmented Muslim vote.

At the same time, there is resistance, at the ground level, to separatist talk. The beleaguered minority of Uttar Pradesh, for instance, is not too keen on confrontation and has shown a decided preference for rapprochement and reconciliation rather than the extremist jargon indulged in by some Muslim politicians. The Islamic Sewak Sangh that is causing concern in Kerala is not for the North Indian Muslim who does not want the support being extended by political parties to take on a confrontationist hue. The Adam Sena floated by some Muslim leaders a few years ago under the patronage of the Naib Imam Ahmed Bokhari, failed to enthuse the minorities and died a natural death.

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IT is clear to the Muslim in the village, however illiterate he might seem, that his fate is linked to that of secularism in this country. And that the fight for secularism cannot be fought by maulanas or those speaking their language, but by political parties and individuals wedded to secularism as an ideology. Bitter experience has taught him that inflammatory speeches by 'Muslim leaders' espousing the Muslim cause generate a reaction which poses a threat to his basic security. But the same cause taken on by political parties and secularists, particularly those from the majority community, makes life more secure for him and his family.

This fact, unfortunately, has not been understood by our political leaders whose handling of the Muslim electorate is still based on conceptions of the past. One, that it is an *en bloc* vote that can be wooed by populist gestures and two, that it will respond better to the rhetoric of 'Muslim' leaders than others. And so one has a variety of individuals at large, of all political hues, claiming to enjoy the confidence of the Muslim community. Some of these self-styled Muslim leaders go a step further by claiming an exclusive right to Islam, and condemning all Muslims who disagree with them as being 'anti-religion'. Despite their zealous assertions there is not a single 'Muslim leader' today who can claim to enjoy the confidence of the Muslim electorate in his constituency. Most of them have changed their constituencies and others have opted for the Rajya Sabha as a decidedly less complicated ground to operate out of. Even so when there is a riot, or a public meeting in a Muslim area, or an issue perceived even today by our politicians as a 'Muslim issue', these gentlemen are pushed to the forefront by the Centrist parties in the mistaken belief that they enjoy more clout with the Muslim electorate than the others. This is simply not true. A V.P.Singh, or even a Paswan generates more confidence in an electorate concerned with its security and well-being than a Syed Shahabuddin spouting fire.

Populist gestures continue. And what is passed off as mass action–the odd *dharna* or demonstration–on Ayodhya, for instance, lacks substance as it lacks strategy and an understanding of what is really at stake. For the politician in the field it is a means of wooing the Muslim vote bank. "The Muslims are with us" is an oft-heard phrase in today's politics with the Centrist parties vying with each other to capture this electorate. It is true that the *dharna* and the demonstration against the BJP has a favourable impression on this minority community all over the country; it is also true that this will not be the only criterion for its vote. After all, the National Front Government fell on the Ayodhya issue and even so the Muslims all over the country scattered in accordance with their regional and local perceptions. A sustained, strategised, national effort is needed to combat communalism for a piecemeal approach will have only piecemeal results.

The dimensions of electoral politics have changed. A major vote bank that could swing political fortunes has started reacting like the rest of the electorate (except the Harijans perhaps). It is cured of the hangover from partition and independence, and the new generation of Muslims are playing for infinitely higher stakes: their future. ■

(An abridged version of this article appeared in *The Hindustan Times*)

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Message from Rio

J.C.KAPUR

The Rio Conference and its outcome were both conditioned by the present world environment. With the breakdown of the Soviet state, visions are being projected that the world will now be ordered by a single superpower backed by highly industrialised countries. And the present situation is being regarded as a victory for *laissez-faire* economies committed to armament based consumerism which, it is expected, will become a way of life all over the world. It is also presumed that the centralised infrastructures of human, energy and other resources will continue as at present to form the basis of future development. Obviously, in projecting such illusions the human, environmental and resources constraints are not being recognised.

Thus the Rio Conference was only the reiteration of the old positions, emphasis on old interests—all presented with a feeling for the welfare, of the planet and the future of humankind. The reality soon became obvious as most participants displayed greater concern for the fall-outs from Rio on their politico-techno-economic power structure than the purpose for which the conference was called.

And this 12-day grand affair called the Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) was attended by more than a 100 heads of states, 2000 NGOs and over 30,000 people. It was convened to awaken our conscience and provide an inspiring vision and a focus on the issues of environment and a destructive attack on cosmic balances threatening our future. But after two years of preparation, millions of miles of travels and producing thousands of tons of paper, all that appears to come out of the conference is that "the world was not yet ready or in a mood for such an exercise".

Apart from the many broadsides such as the German Environment Minister's comment on the US position at the conference as if "it was something like communism hidden by ecology", while someone else called this event "a meeting of the Leftist establishment".

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WE are now passing through an era of the pre-emption of the world's energy resources and this is proposed to be extended to the world's forests. It is for us to be grateful that attempts have not yet been made to pre-empt the energy of the sun which at the moment is considered "too hot to handle and too widespread to monitor". Oil traders were not yet ready for curbs on oil consumption, the US coal lobby rejected emphasis on carbon dioxide emission from coal, the African states were keen to get a convention on desertification and the countries of the South were more concerned with their minimum needs programme and other development plans and also that those who consume must pay. The United States did not want to accept development as a right. Instead of bringing recognition to the people that consumption levels beyond a point were damaging the future, a US delegate stated that "high consumption levels in the North was good for the economic well-being of the South because it provided trade and job for the poor South".

The Rio Declaration Agenda 21 which had relatively smooth sailing lacks commitment, while the Biodiversity Agreement was not signed by the United States and France. While France and a few other countries agreed to contribute the proposed around 0.71 per cent of their GDP, most others hedged and made vague promises.

The issues relating to sustainable development were played down, while the unsustainable lifestyles in many countries were eulogised. Thus an entire range of real issues which formed the basis for such a massive conference, were sidetracked.

Biodiversity, one of the most critical issues, was considered more as a commercial issue to safeguard the interest of companies and countries rather than as the life-support system of the planet. Royalties to be paid and the transfer of technology received more importance than conservation of the environment. All in all, therefore, what happened at Rio was more political than anything to do with environment and development.

Over 2000 NGOs which came to Rio included such broad diversity of people and ideas that it looked more like an Indian fair or a circus than a world conference. There were saints and scholars, Amazonians, vegetarians—all projecting and claiming their own contribution to the preservation of environment. Even the gays claimed homosexuality was ecologically a contributor to population control. The breast-feeding of children was also presented as ecologically beneficial as it saved children from the hazards of processed milk. Whatever may be the contribution of these and hundreds of other NGOs, they clearly represented a voice of protest against one aspect or the other of the armament consumerist model of development. Except for a few who were there to support the line of their country, it was largely a congregation of protest. As such the two wings of the conference—that is, the official and the NGOs—were kept physically and emotionally apart and had little to do with each other.

Bush talked about scientific uncertainty of many of the issues such as global emissions and called it a radical position which will throw a lot of people out of jobs. But no one raised issues concerning the basic processes which led to environment destruction. He raised issues on the forests. While he was not prepared to accept strong action against profligate energy consumption and uncontrolled consumerism, he supported wholeheartedly bringing the world's forests under centralised control. He also considered the right to development of the South as tantamount to the right to destroy environment.

(Continued on page 26)

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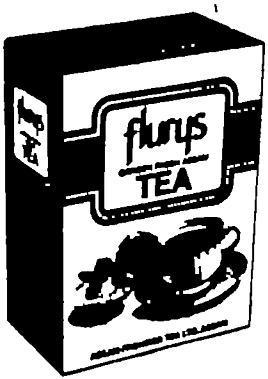

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Dissecting Yugoslavia's Disintegration

ROBERT M. HAYDEN

In a period of slightly less than two years, from September 1989 until June 1991, Yugoslavia went from being the most progressive socialist country in Europe and a leader of the non-aligned movement to being a "state in the process of disintegration", as the European Community put the matter. From June 1991, when the republics of Slovenia and Croatia proclaimed their independence from the Yugoslav federation, until March 1992, what had been one state disintegrated into chaos, accompanied by a civil war. With the recognition of the independence of Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina[1] and their acceptance into the United Nations, the European Community and the United States legally transformed the civil war into an international conflict. With the imposition by the UN Security Council of 'sanctions' on the so-called Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, composed of Serbia and Montenegro, and that entity's isolation from the world, the position that had obtained in 1991 was reversed: Yugoslavia had lost international legitimacy, while the new mini-states that had seceded from the federation had gained it.

This progression of diplomatic steps, of recognition and derecognition, was accompanied by the escalation of warfare within the territory of what then was, and now used to be, Yugoslavia. Following Slovenia's pronouncement of independence in June 1991, several limited military actions took place during which Slovenian forces took control of the international border. This brief, limited conflict was followed by the withdrawal of the Yugoslav army from Slovenia. In August, intensive warfare broke out in parts of the republic of Croatia which had large Serbian populations or which were strategic areas bordering on Serbia.[2] The intensity of this warfare was almost unlimited where it took place but the geographical battlefronts were very confined: most of Croatia was not involved. With the acceptance by Croatia and Serbia of a ceasefire and the placement of UN peacekeeping forces in the disputed regions in early 1992, this conflict also subsided. However, it was followed by the explosion of conflict throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina (B and H) in March 1992, when the EC and the US recognised the independence of Bosnia following a referendum in which the Muslim and Croat segments of the population voted to secede from Yugoslavia while the Serbs boycotted the referendum and proclaimed their own independence from B and H. Warfare in B and H has been unlimited in intensity or geographical area, virtually total war within that republic. The vicious bombardment of Sarajevo by an army that had until weeks earlier justified its existence on the protection of a state that included Bosnia was especially shocking to a Europe that liked to view itself as 'civilised' as was the 'ethnic cleansing' practised by the various sides. The EC, forgetting that these methods had been perfected by some of its own members 50 years earlier, preferred to view the conflict as an aberration caused by a putatively 'Balkans mentality'.[3]

Despite the international recognition of the independence of the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the imposition of 'sanctions' on Serbia (or the so-called Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) for aggression on that newly sovereign state, the war in B and H is a civil war. The newly 'inviolable' borders of B and H divide families and isolate large groups of Serbs and Croats from their 'mother republics'. All three of the 'nations'[4] in B and H, the Muslims, Serbs and Croats, speak one language, Serbo-Croatian. Intermarriage between the groups was high, as it was in other parts of Yugoslavia in which the various nations lived intermingled, and many residents of B and H have found themselves or their spouses suddenly transformed into foreigners. Indeed, it is precisely because it is a civil war that it is so vicious. Civil wars are always the most brutal, perhaps because no one, no matter what their age or gender, is viewed as a non-combatant.

The disintegration of Yugoslavia is a tragedy at many levels. In terms of immediate victims, in the first year of the war more than twenty-thousand people were killed, far more than that wounded, and perhaps two million (out of a pre-war population of 24 million) driven from their homes. Economically, the entire population of what was Yugoslavia has been impoverished, with even the least damaged areas facing massive unemployment and falls of 40 per cent from 1990 levels in their standards of living. Politically, within (ex-) Yugoslavia, what had been the most open and least repressive of state socialist regimes has been replaced by freely elected militaristic state chauvinist ones that are more totalising in intent and effect than the Communists had been in their last decade of rule. Virtually throughout the territory of ex-Yugoslavia, the levels of individual freedom and freedom of the press are far less under the new 'democratic' regimes than they were in the last several years of communism. In terms of international politics, the 'new world order' has shown itself willing to countenance and even encourage the breakup of multinational federations, even when the cost to the peoples concerned is bound to be civil war and long-term regional instability.

The responsibility for the Yugoslav disaster must rest, first, with those Yugoslav leaders who have harnessed the chauvinism of their individual nations to destroy not only their fellow Yugoslavs but also their own several nations, in whose interests they claimed to act. However, the responsibility for the complete breakdown of the Yugoslav state, which has condemned the region to long-term instability and military confrontation, rests with the European Community and the US. Far from ensuring peace, the formal recognition of independent states in what was Yugoslavia ensures the permanent confrontation of regimes defined only by their opposition to each other, with an arms race and future armed conflict virtually guaranteed. A parallel may be drawn with the partition of India in 1947, except that all of the leaders in the formerly Yugoslav republics are Jinnahs, with no Nehrus, to say nothing of Gandhis, in sight. Just as Pakistan can only be defined in opposition to India, so can the various communities ('nations') of speakers of Serbo-Croatian define themselves only in opposition to each other and to any idea of their communality. That all of this has been justified by expressions of the need to destroy communism and by pious references to the 'right of self-determination' should not blind us to the larger geopolitical games involved, or to the implications of a 'new world order' that sees chauvinistic nationalism as a valid justification for the creation of a state.

Geopolitics of a Buffer State

The creation of Yugoslavia after the First World War was meant to be a solution to several geopolitical problems. At the most grand level, the victorious allies sought to create large states that would block German expansion to the East and South,[5] and they wanted to dismember the Germanic empires that had lost the War. The creation of Yugoslavia and of Czechoslovakia served both purposes. Both incorporated regions that had been part of the defeated Austro-Hungarian empire into new, independent states, thus reducing Germanic power in the centre of Europe. At the same time, the creation of these states seemed to meet both the needs and the wishes of the people within them. Larger states would be more viable than smaller ones, and the peoples to be included in each were similar. Czechs and Slovaks speak virtually the same language, while Yugoslavia would unite the speakers of most of the south Slavic languages, which are closely related to each other.[6] Further, in the case of Yugoslavia, the rise of national consciousness in each south Slavic nation during the nineteenth century had been accompanied by a movement for a united state of the south Slavs, as mutual protection against domination by other powers.[7] Apart from this wider ideological appeal, the creation of Yugoslavia seemed to suit the requirements of each nation within it. Thus the Serbs, who had had their own independent state since 1867 but large numbers of whom still resided outside its borders, would unite all of their people in Yugoslavia. Croats, dominated for centuries by Hungary, would break that subjugation. Slovenes, who had never had a state of their own, would acquire one, as would Slavic Macedonians.[8] Further, by separating from the losing side in the War, Croatia avoided having to contribute to the punitive reparations imposed on the Germans and their allies.

In light of the multinational character of Yugoslavia, it has long been fashionable to view it as an 'artificial' state, composed of incompatible and mutually hostile peoples. In fact, Yugoslavia in 1920 was no more artificial than Italy or Germany at the time of their unifications, or India in 1947, or Belgium or Switzerland at any time. Objectively, there are fewer differences in language, religion and culture between Serbs and Croats than there are between Prussians and Bavarians in Germany, for example. Nevertheless, the existence of separate national ideologies among the various Yugoslav peoples, competing with the ideology of Yugoslavism, meant that lines of potential cleavage were built into the Yugoslav state from its inception, and the first 20 years of Yugoslavia's existence saw the development of strong demands for autonomy if not outright secession, primarily by the Croats.[9] It was always possible for politicians inside Yugoslavia to play to these separatist sentiments, and for external powers to use them for their own purpose. Thus in the thirties, Italy and Germany supported Croatian and Macedonian independence movements, including terrorism. In their most dramatic action, these externally-supported terrorists assassinated the King of Yugoslavia in France in 1934.

With these geopolitical considerations in mind, it is not surprising that Hitler's first major aggression was against Czechoslovakia. With the acquiescence of the British and the French, that buffer state was dismembered in 1938. Germa diplomacy made Yugoslavia an ally until a coup in March 194 brought an anti-German government to power in Belgrad Ten days later, Germany attacked Yugoslavia and dismembered it, creating a fascist 'independent state of Croatia governed by the Ustasha, the terrorists who had been supported by Germany and Italy for the preceding decade (similar fascist puppet state was also created in Slovakia). Th new Croatia was enlarged to include Bosnia. The Ustash Government of fascist Croatia, installed in April 1941, bega a campaign of terror and extermination against the large Ser population in Croatia that summer. The express goal of th campaign was to eliminate the Serbs from Croatia, by killin one-third, expelling one-third, and forcibly converting one third to Catholicism.[10] Many tens if not hundreds, o thousands of Serbs were killed. At the same time, howeve other forces, notably Serbian royalists and Tito's Communi Partisans, fought the occupying Germans and each other. The period 1941-45 in Yugoslavia was thus simultaneously war against foreign occupation and a civil war. Atrocities an massacres were committed by all sides.

For reasons still debated by historians, the Allies supported Tito's Partisans instead of the Serbian forces whic supported the king, and the Croatian fascist regime collapse with the demise of the Third Reich. Communist Yugoslavi reconstituted the country that had existed from 1920 unti 1941, with some additional territory. In theory the Communists opposed nationalism, and one of the bedroc ideological principles of Tito's Yugoslavia was 'brotherhoo and unity'. In practice, the politics of the second Yugoslavi were based on balancing national interests, and the countr was quickly organised into republics, drawn largely on ethnonational lines. From 1945 until the end of the Communis regime, national identities retained their importance i politics. Nationalism and separatism, however, were discouraged.[12] The most extreme nationalists were driven out o Yugoslavia, but maintained organisations in other countries notably Germany, the United States and Australia. Many o these organisations were engaged in terrorist activities and were considered by the US Government to be terrorist organisations. However, the activities of these groups were not overly hindered leaving them free to try to destabilise Yugoslavia.

Tito's Yugoslavia was considered a Soviet satellite until 1948, when Tito broke with Stalin and removed Yugoslavia from the sphere of direct Soviet domination. Western support for this 'maverick' Communist regime, at first tacit, became open by the early fifties, when the value of the country as one of the neutral buffer states between NATO and the Warsaw Pact was acknowledged by both sides. Tito, recognising the intermediary potential to play off the surrounding powers, used this geopolitical position to great advantage.

While the division of Europe after the Second World War is generally thought to have been accomplished in response to the pressures of the growing conflict between the Soviet communism and 'the West', it is likely that the containment of Germany was as much a consideration in 1945 as it had been in 1920. The occupation and division of Germany into separate states, first *de facto* and then *de jure*, was accomplished with this in mind. Despite the important role that Austrians played in the Third Reich and the fact that the *anschluss* had been popular in Austria, that country was separated from Germany and absolved of responsibility for the War. At the same time that the 1955 recognition of Austria's independence made it a neutral buffer state between the Warsaw Pact and the NATO countries, it also completed he detachment of that part of the Reich. Similarly, the econstitution of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia re-established them as impediments to German expansion, particulary since the sizeable German populations that had existed in each of these regions for centuries were expelled from both ountries immediately after the War.

The containment of Germany after 1945 was so successful that the importance of independent Austria, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia in this regard has been largely forgotten, except, perhaps, among the Germans themselves. It is certainly striking that the pan-German interest in ensuring that no unified south Slav state exists seems reflected in the close coordination between Austria and the newly united Germany in urging the destruction of Yugoslavia. In the EC, Germany was willing to risk the Community's newly proclaimed unity in foreign policy by insisting on the recognition of Croatia and Slovenia in late 1991. Even though such recognition was opposed by all of the other EC countries, it was accomplished when the Germans threatened unilateral recognition if its partners would not go along. (Of course, why preserving EC unity was more important to the British and the French than it was to the Germans is another question.) In the CSCE, on the other hand, the campaign against Serbia was orchestrated by the Austrians. In any event, it is striking that within two ears of the reunification of Germany, Austria's goal of 1914 and Germany's of 1941 have been achieved: the destruction of the unified south Slav state, the partition by international boundaries of the largest nation in the Balkans (the Serbs), and the creation of German satellite states in that region: Croatia and Slovenia. The recognition of the 'independence' of Bosnia should be seen in this light. The impending disintegration of Czechoslovakia will complete the destruction of he states that had limited the expansion of German influence.

atal Confederation

For all the involvement of foreign hands in Yugoslavia, the ragic fate of the Yugoslav peoples was ensured by their own susceptibility to the appeal of chauvinistic nationalism. The political upheavals that destroyed Yugoslavia were first and oremost the result of actions of Yugoslav politicians themselves, although encouraged and aided by foreign powers.

Despite the bitter heritage of the civil war of 1941-45, ntegration in the country advanced substantially from 1945 until the late eighties. The number of people who identified their nationality as 'Yugoslav' (rather than Serb, Croat, etc.) ose substantially.[13] The rate of marriages between peoples of different nationalities was about 10 per cent nationwide in the eighties but considerably higher in those areas in which the populations were most mixed. Thus in Croatia, which had an ntermarriage rate of 17 per cent overall, the rate in some heavily mixed regions approached 40 per cent.[14] Most of these marriages were between Serbs and Croats, the very groups most heavily antagonistic to each other during the civil war of 1941-45.

Regardless of this living proof of the compatibility of the Yugoslav peoples and their growing integration, the political tructures of the country did not recognise this integration, to ay nothing of encouraging it. Instead, the country was divided into 'republics', each except B and H bearing the name of one of the national groups and incorporating most of its traditional heartland. This administrative division may not have been dangerous in the earlier years of the second, Communist Yugoslavia, because of the tight Leninist one-party political tructure and also a federal constitutional structure that gave eal power to the Central Government. However, the claim to fame of the Yugoslav variant of communism was the attempt to develop a less centralised, less bureaucratic, more democratic socialism, which was symbolised under the term 'self-management'. In theory, the League of Communists of Yugoslavia would grow less and less involved in decision-making, while citizens and workers managed their own affairs.[15] However, an attempt to liberalise the political system in the late sixties opened the way for an openly nationalist movement in Croatia which was barely suppressed in 1971. In response, 'reforms' were enacted of both the political system and the federal structure. While the famed oxymoronic principle of 'democratic centralism' remained in regard to the League of Communists, the solution to the 'nationalist question' was to give even greater autonomy to the individual republics. In effect, constitutional amendments enacted from 1969 to 1971 transformed the Yugoslav federation into a confederation of republics, in which the Central Government had very little power. Federal legislative bodies were composed only of representatives of the republics, not of the people directly. All federal legislation had to be approved by all the constituent entities of the federation, and federal laws were to be administered by republican authorities. There was no federal court system, although a single federal court was empowered to hear cases between members of the federation, while a Constitutional court could hear challenges to the constitutionality of legislation and administrative acts. This confederal structure was refined and enshrined in the Constitution of 1974. Enforcement of the decisions of these courts, however, was problematical.

While President Tito lived, the confederal nature of the Yugoslav Constitution was largely irrelevant since his own personal and constitutional power was virtually unlimited. Upon his death in 1980, the constitutional structure seemed to provide mechanisms of governance, and the post-Tito transition went, initially, smoothly. However, the Yugoslav economy began to decline rapidly entering a period that came to be known as the 'permanent crisis', with increasing unemployment and inflation. The resulting political pressures showed the weaknesses of the confederal system since it was difficult to obtain the unanimous agreement needed for any effective action. Instead, the leaders of the various republics entered a period of what has been called 'combative federalism' in which many a federal decision was held hostage by one or more of the republics, in order to obtain gains in other areas.[16] The result, of course, was to prevent effective reforms, thus intensifying the economic crisis.

The worsening economic situation and the growing crisis of socialism in Europe [17] increased pressure for political change. In the early eighties, analyses were published that pinpointed the sources of the 'permanent crisis' in the system of self-management socialism and specifically in the confederal nature of the Yugoslav state.[18] However, by the mid-eighties, criticism of the system took another turn particularly in the republics of Serbia and Slovenia.[19] There, 'dissident' intellectuals began to enunciate criticisms of the Yugoslav federation as harmful to the interests of their several nations. Slovenia, the republic with the highest standard of living in Yugoslavia and one of the lowest rates of unemployment in the world, claimed that it was being exploited by the rest of the country since resources from the wealthier republics were used to help develop the less well-off ones. Serbs, on the other hand, objected to what they saw as the unequal position of Serbia within the federation. While the 1974 Constitution had given virtually complete autonomy to all of the other republics, Serbia had been divided by the creation of the two

'Autonomous Provinces' of Kosovo and Vojvodina within its borders. These provinces, nominally part of Serbia, were actually equal units of the federation with the republics. Further, Serbia itself had no control over the provinces but the latter could exert power over Serbia. Thus, the provinces had representations within the Serbian Parliament, but the republic had no representation within the provincial parliaments. Further, while amendments to the Serbian Constitution required the agreement of the provinces, the provincial Constitutions could be amended without the consent of Serbia. This situation was particularly galling to the Serbs because the province of Kosovo had been the heart of the medieval Serbian kingdom, the source of the myths of Serbian nationhood, but had passed out of Serbian control. Since 1945, Serbs had left Kosovo in droves, reducing their percentage of the provincial population from about 50 per cent to less than 15 per cent in the late 1980s. The per cent of Albanians in the population had increased correspondingly. Thus Serbs saw their co-nationals as a threatened minority in Kosovo, while the Kosovo Albanians saw themselves as a threatened minority within Serbia.[20] Resentment on both sides built throughout the 1980s as Serbia resorted to the kinds of methods of control used by the Israelis in the Occupied Territories.

Serbs, in fact, began to feel increasingly that Yugoslavia had been created and maintained at their expense, and that the Serbs had lost heavily in the federal state. Their resentment was given form in a Memorandum by a 'group of intellectuals' at the Serbian Academy of Sciences, drafted in 1986.[21] Though the Memorandum was never published, it was leaked to the press and sparked great discussion throughout Yugoslavia. The Memorandum condemned the division of their nation in three of the Yugoslav republics and even inside the borders of the Serbian republic itself. It saw the development of post-war Yugoslavia as a continuation of a pre-War Communist conspiracy against Serbia and the policies of Tito's regime as aimed at keeping Serbs subordinate to other Yugoslav nations. It also saw Serbia as exploited economically by the richer republics.

The rising Serbian anxiety over the Kosovo situation and the resentments expressed in the Memorandum were aimed at the Communist leadership. However, what occurred was not the overthrow of the one-party socialist state, but rather its transformation into a one-party national chauvinist one.[22] Slobodan Milosevic, one of the new generation of Yugoslav Communist politicians, embraced what had been dissident nationalist criticism to transform the Serbian League of Communists, in a virtual coup inside that party in late 1987. Milosevic, who aspired to be a new Tito, organised mass demonstrations in Vojvodina, Kosovo and the Republic of Montenegro, overthrowing the regimes there and replacing them with his own followers. He thus inspired fear in the leadership of the other republics and gave ammunition to the nationalists in other republics, who could cite Serbia's rising nationalism as threats to their own peoples. The Slovenian leadership, under heavy pressure from nationalists in their own republic and afraid of Milosevic's growing power, attempted to co-opt their local critics by adopting a nationalistic platform themselves and by searching for ways to limit potential assertions of Central authority over their republic. They found the latter in the confederal structure of the 1974 Constitution, and in September 1989 Slovenia pronounced a doctrine of republican supremacy over the Centre, saying that in cases in which the federal and republican Constitutions conflicted, they would follow the republican Constitution. This position, soon adopted as well by the Croats and then by the Serbs, more or less ensured the destruction of Yugoslavia and the civil war since it precluded constitutional mechanisms for resolving conflicts, leaving only unilateral actions backed by threats of force. That the Slovenian doctrine was arguably congruent with the text of the Constitution shows the weakness of that poorly drawn document.

Nationalism, Homicidal and Suicidal

After Milosevic's ascension to power in Serbia in 1987, the politics of Yugoslavia became increasingly based on nationalism of a singularly vicious kind. The logic of Yugoslav nationalism was binary in structure and zero-sum in content. In this kind of nationalism, the individual does not exist except as a member of a nation and those with ties to other nations are suspect. Further, every element of social, political and economic life is seen in zero-sum terms: a gain for one nation can only be at the expense of another. The idea that all parties could gain by cooperation or at least mutual accommodation was strikingly absent, since anyone who suggested any kind of concession to other nations was immediately branded a traitor. This structural logic, combined with the traditional European concept of the nation-state, renders minorities within such a state not only foreign, but contaminating of the bodies, social and political.[23] Within each of the republics except B and H, politics was immediately transformed into a combination of campaign against the largest local minority and against the Yugoslav federation itself. At this point, the term 'self-determination' took on a sinister connotation never envisioned by Woodrow Wilson or, presumably, by those who included it in various United Nations documents. In the Yugoslav reading in 1990, self-determination would be achieved when the given nation achieved its own sovereign state, in which sovereignty rested with the ethnic nation, not with the body of equal citizens. 'Concessions' to minorities were given grudgingly, if at all, and in ways designed to indicate that the members of these minorities could never be equal with those of the majority. Indeed, the politics of these regimes reversed the logic of 'affirmative action' or 'compensatory discrimination' in favour of minorities,[24] promising instead 'negative action' (to coin a phrase) to ensure that members of minorities would not be given important positions. Sovereignty, of course, precluded any idea of federation and while the concept of 'confederation' was frequently cited, it is clear that those who raised that idea did so as a smoke-screen to obscure their goal of destroying Yugoslavia.

With the fall of communism in Europe in 1989, elections in Yugoslavia became inevitable and were held in 1990. Again, the confederal nature of the constitutional (dis)order was used to help destroy the federation, this time by republican vetoes on federal elections, while the republican ones were held. This strategy gave 'democratic' legitimacy to the newly-elected republican governments but denied the federal government a chance to obtain its own legitimacy. Of course, to do so was necessary for the several republican regimes, since the federal Prime Minister, Ante Markovic, was the single most popular politician in all of Yugoslavia in 1990, and had federal elections been held, he would almost certainly have won them. To avoid this challenge to their own supremacy, the republics of Slovenia and Croatia blocked the federal elections.

The elections in 1990 doomed Yugoslavia, although the voters did not vote to do so. In the first elections, in Slovenia, a coalition of small to tiny parties assembled a 53 per cent majority in the new Parliament, and excluded the two parties that had achieved the largest vote. The new government pushed for 'sovereignty' with the intent of destroying Yugosavia, though this goal had not been put to the voters. In Croatia, a badly written election law let the extreme nationalist Croatian Democratic Union gain a two-thirds majority in Parliament on the basis of 43 per cent of the vote; it promptly used its unassailable legislative power to undermine the federal state.

In these republics, and in Serbia later in the year, the parties that won based their appeal on a combination of national chauvinism at the federal level and hostility to the argest local minority. For all of the peoples of Yugoslavia, however, the adoption of this kind of nationalism was likely to be both homicidal and suicidal. The homicide was implied by he relegation of minorities to the political role of scapegoat: all problems are due to the minorities, who 'don't belong'. The same logic had been applied in Europe in the 1930s and 1940s, with disastrous results. In Yugoslavia, the most sensitive minority was bound to be the Serbs in Croatia, since exactly his kind of nationalism had led to genocide against them by he fascist 'Independent State of Croatia' in 1941-45. Rather han calm their fears, however, the new President of Croatia, who before the election had described that fascist state as a legitimate manifestation of the historical aspirations of the Croatian people", and who had published a book that amounted to an apologia for the genocide,[25] pursued igorously chauvinistic policies.

In such a case, the minorities are likely to resist, perhaps o rebel; but such rebellion must be forcibly put down to show he sovereignty of the majority in its own state. This cycle of iolence, already begun in Kosovo in the 1980s, spread to Croatia in the late summer of 1990, when Serbs in parts of Croatia that were almost entirely Serbian rebelled at the new tate chauvinism of the Croatian Democratic Union Government.[26] The government, rather than attempt to accommodate Serbian fears, vowed only to crush the rebellion. Its ttempts to do so were resisted by the Serbs and the first stages of the civil war began.

In B and H the situation was rather different, since there was no majority population. The results of the 1990 elections aralleled those of the distribution of the nations in the opulation, with a Muslim nationalist party getting about 50 er cent of the vote, a Serb nationalist party getting about 33 er cent of the vote and the Croatian Democratic Union etting the rest. These parties temporarily formed a cooperative government, more or less, but as Yugoslavia crumbled, the Muslims and Croats formed an alliance to proclaim indeendence. Since a similar alliance had been used against them uring the civil war 50 years earlier, the Serbs objected, and ttempted to secede from Bosnia. The political configuration for the civil war there in 1992 was thus established.

The structural logic of the nationalists in Yugoslavia thus made violence inevitable by leaving no room for compromise. In the event, the war that the Croats started with their attempts to forcibly subdue the Serbian regions of Croatia was ursued most vigorously by the Serbs, not coincidentally the iggest losers in the breakup of the joint Yugoslav state. The erbian campaign of terror, forced deportation and murder in Croatia in 1991 and Bosnia in 1992 paralleled that waged by the Ustashe in the 'Independent State of Croatia' in 1941–45. Yet this homicidal nationalism was also suicidal, especially for erbia. As a result of the breakup of the federal state, all the nations of Yugoslavia, and all its former citizens, have lost. As united country, Yugoslavia was relatively prosperous and ad prospects for greater prosperity, and the region saw its nly half-century of peace. Ironically, the generation of lobodan Milosevic and the confederalist leaders of Slovenia in 1989 was the first generation in history in the Balkans that did not itself have to fight a war. Tragically, these leaders ensured that their sons and grandsons are almost certainly going to have to do so. The future for the ex-Yugoslav republics will probably be like that of Pakistan: corrupt, militaristic or outright military regimes, with permanent hostility to their closest neighbours. But such is the result of following Jinnahs, seeking a homogeneous nation-state rather than a democracy of citizens.

'International Community' and Destruction of Yugoslavia

While the Yugoslavs themselves bear the primary responsibility for their own tragedy, the posture of the 'international community' (in reality the EC and the US) seemed designed to ensure that the disaster would occur. First, their ready acceptance of the dismemberment of Yugoslavia stands in striking contrast to the general rule, that state boundaries are not changeable. Thus the world has resisted the demands of the Kurds for their own state, demands certainly more justified than those of Slovenia and Croatia. Similarly, it has refused to recognise *de jure* the *de facto* division of Cyprus. Lebanon has been a state in name only since the mid-seventies. In the case of Yugoslavia, the open Austrian and German political support for Slovenian and Croatian separatism (and more covert diplomatic and logistical support, include assisting the creation of armed forces in these secessionist republics) made the preservation of the federation difficult.

The stance of the US and the EC is even more curious when it is recognised that the destruction of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia undoes a major element of the peace strategies following both the World Wars. The German role in the dismemberment of Yugoslavia must have been clear to the other European countries and to the US, and one must wonder why they acquiesced so quickly.

One reason may be in a temporary communality of interest between the US and Germany and the end of the Cold War. With the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, the Yugoslav Army was one of the largest armies in Europe, and was outside of American control. The easiest way to destroy that army was to destroy the Yugoslav state. This goal may also have accounted for the quick American recognition of the independence of B and H, a step that all parties must have known would induce open warfare in that republic. Bosnia had been the centre of Yugoslav defence strategy since 1920 and had the heaviest concentrations of military industries in Yugoslavia. By cutting the army off from its most important strategic positions and its most important domestic suppliers, the US and the EC ensured its rapid debilitation.

A rather different reason for American involvement in the dismemberment of Yugoslavia is ideological. Much to Serbia's misfortune, Milosevic's identity as the last Communist ruler of Serbia weighed more heavily than the strident nationalism that he shared with the leaders of the other Yugoslav republics. In American eyes, it was easy to present the conflicts between Serbia and the Slovene-Croat axis as being between (Eastern) communism and (Western) democracy. That all participants were in fact closer philosophically to fascism was perhaps difficult for the US and the EC to admit, particularly as Germany and Austria were most fervent in advancing the cause of the 'threatened democracies'.

Yet it is also possible that the reaction of the EC and the US was in fact based more on naivette than on conspiracy. In 1989, the general public assumption in the Western world, and especially in the US, was that the downfall of communism would automatically be followed by democracy in Eastern

Europe. That Hitler was the most fervent anti-Communist of the century, and that European thought over the last hundred and fifty years has oscillated between the poles of 'nation' and 'class' as organising principles,[27] largely missing the democratic concept of a policy of individual citizens,[28] did not seem to enter the public discourse. Perhaps Americans and western Europeans really thought that fascism was dead. In any event, the ready acceptance of the results of a single set of hurriedly called elections as affording democratic legitimacy to the winners made it easy for parties and politicians with no democratic inclinations whatever to wrap themselves in the trappings of the new post-socialist cult of the politically sacred. Indeed, the international community's ratification of the destruction of Yugoslavia may be seen as a cynical, ominous betrayal of any commitment to the development of democratic regimes in the formerly socialist countries. It may be that the death of Yugoslavia was preordained by the realpolitik considerations of the major powers, despite the tragic consequences that Yugoslavia's dissolution meant for all of the Yugoslav peoples. ■

Notes

1. Despite the apparent duality of its name, the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina was one entity within Yugoslavia and has been recognised as an independent state by the international community. It will be referred to in this paper as 'B and H'.
2. The republics in erstwhile Yugoslavia were each more or less defined according to the largest national group within it, as identified by their names: thus Slovenia was the republic of the Slovenes, Croatia of Croats, Serbia of Serbs, Montenegro of Montenegrins, Macedonia of Macedonians. However, most of these republics had large minority populations within them, and some parts of Croatia were, in fact, overwhelmingly Serbian in population. B and H was a special category, with a mixed population of about 50 per cent Slavic Muslims (identified as a 'nation' in 1967), 32 per cent Serbs and 17 per cent Croats (1981 figures).
3. The literal orientalism of many Western analyses of the Yugoslav situation is explored in Milica Bakic-Hayden and Robert M. Hayden, "Orientalist Variations on the Theme 'Balkans': Symbolic Geography in Recent Yugoslav Cultural Politics", *Slavic Review* 50: 1-15 (March 1992).
4. The supposed distinctions between 'nationalism' and 'communalism' blur in Yugoslavia. Serbs, Croats, and Slav Muslims in Yugoslavia speak dialects of the same language (although the Cyrillic script is used by Serbs, Latin script by Croats and Muslims), and the divisions between them are based primarily on religion: Serbs are Orthodox Christians, Croats Roman Catholics, and Muslims are, of course, Muslims. Since the Muslims are descendants of Serbs and Croats who converted to Islam during the 500 years of Turkish occupation of the Balkans, the populations are not physically distinguishable. Nonetheless, they are defined in terms of birth into a religious community rather than of personal adherence to a faith. Thus many Communists, *a priori* atheists, still identified themselves as Serbs, Croats and Muslims in terms of nationality. The increasing rates of intermarriage in Communist Yugoslavia mean that few communities are as 'imagined' as those of Yugoslavia, and few so intertwined.
5. The Germans were opposed to a unified south Slav state for just these reasons. It should be recalled that World War I started in 1914 when Austria attacked Serbia in an attempt to block Serbia's expansion into Bosnia, which Austria had annexed in 1908.
6. 'Yugoslavia' means 'land of the south Slavs' in Serbo-Croatian. The south Slavic languages include Serbo-Croatian, Slovenian, Macedonian and Bulgarian; but the language question has always been vexed. Croat nationalists have always claimed that Croatian is a different language from Serbian, not simply a different dialect; while the Bulgarians deny that Macedonian is a separate language, claiming it to be a dialect of Bulgarian. On purely linguistic grounds, the first claim is clearly nonsense, the second one more plausible. Of course, the political implications of these claims are tied to the Romantic vision that requires each nation to have its own language, and, conversely, defines 'nation' largely on linguistic grounds.
7. The best recent history of the formation of Yugoslavia is Alexis Djilas, *The Contested Country* (Harvard University Press, 1991). Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics* (Cornell University Press, 1984) is a close study of the formation of Yugoslavia and the first few years of the new state's existence.
8. The 'Macedonian problem' has once again arisen in Greece's refusal to recognise the independence of Macedonia as long as the Macedonians call their state Macedonia. The Greek argument is that Macedonia is a Greek word and names a region in Greece, and that calling Slav Macedonia 'Macedonia' recognises Slav claims to Greek territory. In reality, the Greeks are worried about the Slav minority in Greek Macedonia until now treated by Greece in civilised European fashion by denying their existence, who might want to secede from Greece. The Greeks demand that Macedonia be called Skopje, after its capital, a position analogous to a demand by India that Bangladesh call itself the Republic of Dhaka. Macedonia, in fact, faces territorial pretensions from Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria, and possibly Albania.
9. Banac, *op. cit.*
10. The Croatian genocide of Serbs, Jews and other undesirables, and the ideology behind it, is discussed in A. Djilas, *The Contested Country* (*op. cit*).
11. A highly readable account of this multifaceted war, by a leading participant, is Milovan Djilas' *Wartime* (Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1978).
12. Yugoslavia was not the only Communist country to deal with nationalism by formally recognising the importance of national identity while denying the legitimacy of chauvinistic nationalism. This ideological balancing act was facilitated by the centralism of the Leninist state, which kept political power in the hands of an exceptionally small elite. On the other hand, with the increasing fragility of Communist economic systems, this type of 'ethno-federalism' left the federal entity liable to fragmentation, since in a growing absence of tangible rewards for followers, absolute control over local resources became essential for the maintenance of power by republican leaders [see Philip Roeder, 'Soviet Federalism and Ethnic Mobilisation', *World Politics* 43:196-232 (1991)].
13. Stevan Burg and Michael Berbaum, 'Community, Integration and Stability in Multinational Yugoslavia', *American Political Science Review* 83:535-554 (1989). These authors were careful to note the fragility of this 'Yugoslav' identity, however, and suggested that it might decline as the economy worsened. This pessimism was, apparently, justified; figures from the census of 1991 (which may not be very reliable) indicated a sharp drop in the numbers of those who identified themselves as 'Yugoslavs'.
14. *Vreme*, March 9, 1991.
15. The literature on Yugoslav self-management is truly vast. The best introduction to the history of Communist Yugoslavia and the development of self-management socialism through the early 1970s is Dennison Rusinow's *The Yugoslav Experiment, 1948-74* (University of California Press, 1978).
16. Slobodan Samardzic, *Jugoslavija pred Iskusenjem Federalizma* (Beograd, 1989). See also Dennison Rusinow, ed., *Yugoslavia: A Fractured Federalism* (Wilson

Centre, 1988). Relations between the Yugoslav republics from the mid-1980s until the collapse of the (con) federation exhibited virtually all the failings of confederations that were pointed out by Hamilton, Madison and Jay in the early numbers of the *Federalist Papers* (1787).

17. By the late seventies, one joke common in East European intellectual circles was that no one believed in socialism anymore, except Western intellectuals.

18. See, for example, Iovan Miric, *Sistem i Kriza* (Zagreb, 1983). It should be noted that *glasnost* had thus come to Yugoslavia long before Gorbachev appeared on the Soviet scene.

19. The Serbs and Slovene positions are analysed in greater detail in Robert M. Hayden, 'Yugoslavia: From Civil Society to Civil War', paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Chicago, IL, November 1991.

20. Actually, both beliefs were valid. However, international human rights activists, concerned primarily with the actions of governments, focused mainly on the plight of the Kosovo Albanians and largely ignored that of the Kosovo Serbs.

21. One of the least pleasant aspects of studying Yugoslavia since the late eighties has been observing the transformation into fervent (sometimes raving) nationalists of people who had been good, critical intellectuals. A comparable feeling might be engendered if the faculty of the History Department at JNU were suddenly to embrace the theories of P N. Oak.

22. A similar transformation of a nominally socialist regime into a chauvinistic nationalist one had been accomplished by Ceausescou in Romania in the late seventies. See Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism* (University of California Press, 1991).

23. *Cf* Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966). Minorities are 'matter out of place' in Douglas' terms, hence polluting and thus dangerous.

24. See Marc Galanter, *Competing Equalities* (Oxford University Press, 1984).

25. Franjo Tudjman, *Bespuca Povijesne Zbilnosti* (Zagreb, 1989).

26. It must be acknowledged that the Serbs' fears were intensified by a propaganda campaign mounted by the Serbian Government, as chauvinistically nationalist as that in Croatia. The actions of the two governments thus complemented each other in feeding the fears of the Serbs: the Croatian Government's 'firm hand' policy seemed to prove the truths of the Serbian government's anti-Croat propaganda.

27. See Roman Szporluk, *Communism and Nationalism: Karl Marx versus Friedrich List* (Oxford University Press, 1988).

28 See Louis Dumont, *Essays on Individualism* (University of Chicago Press, 1986).

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Jawaharlal Nehru

(October 4, 1940)

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IMPRESSIONS

The End Of Compassion

DINESH MOHAN

"The poor people were herded into a university campus in the Caribbean city of Barranquilla in the early hours of Sunday and beaten to death..." So goes a recent news report from Colombia in South America. When confronted with the problems of the Narbada Dam oustees a senior government economist retorted: "Well, some people have to pay the costs of development." Poor people seem to be an embarrassment and also expendable according to present norms the world over. If they didn't exist then it would be so much the better for all of us! If you can't kill them, you can at least pretend that they don't exist.

Consider our own situation. Our population has increased by two per cent every year in recent times; the grain production has remained stable, and pulse production declined. Obviously some people have less to eat. But we take pride in the fact that our grain stocks have gone up!

The health budget has been reduced. This means less money for government hospitals and higher treatment costs for poor people. But higher amounts can be deducted from incomes for health and health insurance expenses for those who pay taxes. The relatively well-off can share their medical expenses among themselves with the help of insurance policies. A reasonable form of socialism?

Lower middle class people end up spending almost ten per cent of their salaries for travelling to work but senior bureaucrats get free rides in staff cars and business executives get free cars with drivers. In the new Budget, deductible hotel expenses have been raised from Rs 600 to Rs 1200 per day. This means that the poor through indirect taxes pay for the rich to travel free and stay in expensive hotels. Quite obviously, the rich like sharing resources as long as the sharing is done by the poor!

The author teaches at the Centre for Biomedical Engineering, Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi.

The 1992-93 Budget has been hailed as pathbreaking, market-friendly, two steps in the right direction, integrating us with the world economy, etc. But to what end and for whom? I am not asking these questions as a rhetorical device. Nor am I ignorant of all the arguments trotted out about the *failure* of socialism and the *death* of Marxism. I am also quite aware of the evils of the centralised controls evolved by the IAS-boxwallah complex. However, if this complex had been broken by some widespread people's movement then we need not have worried too much. But that is not so. The old complex has only been replaced by a bankwallah-*dukandar* complex. The old players' progeny have just changed their loyalties.

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THE fact is that compassion is out as a value. That is why the poor don't matter or they don't exist. The only recognition of their existence comes from private guards outside private VIPs' homes and official guards outside official VIPs' homes. In this market-friendly society, those inside these homes obviously do not consider those outside to be very friendly. The number of these guards has gone up dramatically over the past ten years. Is this also "good for the economy"?

Most of those particularly in favour of our variety of globalisation are also very upset with the "deteriorating law and order problem". They fear that "terrorism" in Punjab, Kashmir and the North-East can frighten foreign investors away. But they forget that "terrorism" of all kinds—kidnapping, murders and communal riots organised by criminals and the state—have increased dramatically in the 1980s all over India. This has coincided with "liberalisation" of the economy. Is this just a coincidence? And India is not the only low-income country where this has happened—Sri Lanka, Brazil....

The reason I raise these questions is because we will have to go beyond clichés of all kinds if we have to find a peaceful way forward for ourselves. There are very few precedents for India—multilingual, multireligious, multiethnic, extremely hierarchichal and very young as a nation-state. The only other nation we could have been compared with is China. But they took much better care of health, nutrition and education of their citizens before they opened their doors. So we can't really follow their policies now. But they do give us a clue.

There are no successful nation-states in the world today who did not give a great deal of importance to equal opportunities in health, education and nutrition in their early years of development. This is true for all political systems. Even in the USA almost everyone went to neighbourhood schools, state universities were almost free for a very long time, agriculture was heavily subsidised and controlled and the town doctor under tremendous social pressure. Out of the rich countries, health statistics are about the worst in the US where socialised medicine did not develop. The US neglected a significant minority of its citizens—the Blacks. Now the society has to pay for its past neglect in forms of high rates of crime, unemployment and violence and non-functional cities. There seem to be no easy solutions on the horizon for them either.

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WE don't seem to have learnt from our or others' experiences. We established socialism for the rich but it had a human face at least for some time. And that kept our social fabric together for a few years. The frailties and hypocrisies of the system were exposed by the mid-seventies. That is when our system should have been decentralised, and opportunities extended to the poor. Instead, we went in for debilitating centralisation.

By the mid-seventies we had a good scientific and technological infrastructure which was far ahead of most other nations. We should have liberalised the opportunities for these highly trained persons. Instead by the late seventies we closed the doors for their development and opened the door further for the favoured ones to develop technology by trade.

These past policies were made by almost the same set of actors who are at the centre-stage today. They are in effect repeating their earlier actions—redistributing the wealth among rich politicians, bureaucrats and traders. It is not as if this has gone unnoticed. Talk to any hard working *mochi*, bus driver, small farmer or serious school teacher. They will express similar views but in more colourful language.

Our economists and politicians have to bring back compassion into their world view. All political movements and economic policies are likely to fail if they are explicitly devoid of a compassionate world view. Especially in a society where the majority of the people are poor. ■

EDUCATION

A 'Brahminical Order' in Place of Academic Renewal

BISWAMOY PATI

Prof Veena Das' 'The First Report of the Academic Renewal Committee' cannot and should not be dismissed by anyone connected with the process of education, especially teaching. It comes at a juncture when the government agencies are on the threshold of declaring the educational establishment as a 'sick industry'; there is a revival of discussion on the Accredition Councils; debates on the question of resource generation from within educational institutions; rumours about DA cuts, reduction of the retirement age for teachers and the percentage of teachers to be allowed to take study leave. One can add on many things to this list; however, it would be sufficient to visualise a dark future, with the Indian state declaring a major offensive against the system of higher education.

Consequently, it is significant that the Delhi University has appointed a Committee for Academic Renewal and Prof Das' draft has been circulated for a discussion, even though the participants were chosen very selectively. It is not possible to take up every point raised by Prof Das. We shall, however, take up and examine some of the issues she focuses on; these can be roughly identified as : (1) absenteeism of some teachers; (2) the lack of control over the work spaces at colleges, and the perception that these institutions act as major obstacles to the life projects of everyone connected with them; (3) the alienation of teachers; (4) the career advancement of teachers which undermines the academic process; (5) the young/old teacher dichotomy; (6) the question of empowering the teacher; (7) educating girl students to face problems of dowry, violence or unexpected deaths.

However, this draft suffers from certain major methodological flaws. The writer, a leading sociologist, has not appended any questionnaire, lists of teachers and students with whom she had 'formal' or 'informal discussions' and the bibliographical details of the books, articles and reports consulted by her. Moreover, the top-heaviness of her discourse is blatant in the way she refers to discussions with college principals, since the large majority of them are isolated from the process of teaching and are in their office, as everyone knows, due to their extra-academic qualifications.

Before going any further let us delineate certain basic problems affecting various institutions of Delhi University.

1. In many colleges there are 'young teachers' who have grown old/bald as temporary teachers, and they continue to teach without knowing what would be their fate in the next academic year.
2. Many evening colleges have frequent power cuts, and without any alternative source of electricity, classes are often affected
3. In many colleges the classrooms are worse than stables, lacking basic amenities like fans, desks and lights.
4. There are many institutions in this University which lack proper drinking water, and there are incredible debates centred around whether the dog that was found in the overhead water tank was dead or alive.
5. Many of the colleges have libraries which are overcrowded, provide outdated books and lack basic journals needed by the students.
6. Many teachers of English in this University are forced to teach English literature in Hindi.
7. Unlike the departments, the principle of rotation does not apply to the heads of the colleges, preventing any possibilities of change.
8. On many occasions there are no separate toilets for women teachers, and that most of the toilets in this University are virtual hell holes.

It is at this juncture that one should raise three questions: Is Prof Das aware of at least some of these problems ? Going by her Report, she is not. Is it really worthwhile talking about 'Academic Renewal' being partially/totally ignorant of these problems ? And, finally, should not these be given some space in a 'Report on Academic Renewal'?

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ANOTHER major methodological problem of Prof Das relates to the splitting-up of Delhi University into two binaries—

Biswamoy Pati teaches Sociology at Sri Venkateswara College, Delhi University, New Delhi.

under-graduate and post-graduate. This goes against the very logic of the process through which Delhi University frames its syllabus, conducts its teaching, tutorials and examinations. This becomes specifically relevant since there have been consistent attempts to divide teachers as college versus university teachers. In fact, Prof Das, method reinforces/legitimises this phenomenon most unambiguously.

And, it is precisely these methodological problems which undermine the Report as one hopes to illustrate through this short intervention.

Prof Das begins with a passing reference to a 'severe crunch on resources'. (p.2) She refers to the 'absenteeism of teachers in some Colleges' and the need to go beyond the 'policeman's approach'. (p.2) The implicit argument seems very clear–everything is fine at the binary opposite work-place. In order to avoid a discussion on this, it is immediately made clear that the purpose of her Report is to 'concentrate on under-graduate education'. This, we are told, is 'central to the life of a university'. (p.2) Given this, her discourse abstracts it from those connected with the process of under-graduate teaching. And, then, in the name of not intending to discipline/punish, chart out a 'Brahminical Order', which is hegemonic in the sense that it leaves virtually no space for any discussion and debate. This is sought to be superimposed from above' by someone who is virtually unconnected with the process and problems of under-graduate teaching. Consequently, her sentiment regarding the active involvement of the Colleges where the teaching is done' cannot be taken seriously.

Then we are told of how in the colleges no one seems to have any sense of 'control over their work environment'. Institutions', we are told, have become 'major obstacles' to their (as, for example, students, teachers, administrators, etc.) life projects. (p.3) Thus, in Prof Das' view the colleges have already reached a 'sick mill' stage, and in many ways it echoes a sentiment articulated by the various government agencies: Bring in order (or, control as Prof Das would have it) to save under-graduate teaching from chaos.'

This is explained through the sense of alienation that exists. And, what accounts for this ? We are told about the regularly irregular Executive Council/Academic Council meetings in the past a pointer to how weak the democratic structure is in this national university. However, we are not told how this could go on for 'several years' (p.4), or who is responsible for this and how this could go on for 'several years' (p.4), or who is responsible for this and how this could be prevented in the future–presumably because it does not concern under graduate teaching ! Then the Report refers to an informal feeling' that the meetings at these bodies are dominated by elected members who represent trade union interests'. (p.4) Perhaps, Prof Das ought to have closely examined the structure of Delhi University's EC and AC which would have prevented her from articulating this point without any qualifications. However, her ire against the elected members is understandable, given their antithetical existence vis-a-vis the 'Brahminical Order' she hopes to enforce. And, given the irregular EC/AC meetings we are told about, coupled with major offensives against the teaching community in the last decade, how does Prof Das expect these bodies to have any sustained and meaningful academic discussion ? Prof Das' discourse seeks to blend two contradictory arguments : she is critical of the irregular EC/AC meetings and appreciates the collective wisdom' (p.4) of the University, and, simultaneously, she opposes the idea of elected representatives. And, it is precisely here that her method gets unmasked.

Continuing to explain alienation, Prof Das refers to some colleges where life ceases to exist after the 12.30 PM University specials have left. Besides the obvious fact that this is applicable to some departments, it is worth thinking why this happens. Prof Das does not have anything to say regarding the unresolved housing question. Most teachers have to cover huge distances. In an ever-expanding city like Delhi, this could be upto 60 to 70 kilometres on a single day. Consequently, it is not possible to stay on unless you live on the campus. And, hang around for what ? In fact, Prof Das should do a separate sociological study about the composition, contributions, etc. of this section before making this forceful point.

Teaching, like any other profession, has good and bad people. Any talk of regular teaching not being conducted in some colleges (and one can add, departments) does not mean anything unless something concrete is delineated, along with suggestions to improve the situation like the Academic Planning Committee (composed of teachers) which has worked quite effectively in many colleges.

Prof Das refers to career advancement breeding alienation. If teaching is located as a professional career isn't it naivety to expect teachers not to look towards career advancement ? And, about 'Quit India'—that is, foreign trips—it would have been really productive if she offered us some statistics. In such a case, the 'emulators' of her Brahminical Order would be a few handfuls as compared to the 'high priests' of this order. And, the assumption that teachers in colleges do not look 'at their own institutions as sources for intellectual development' (p.6) reflects how abstract she is from the process she has chosen to write a Report on.

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PROF DAS also talks of two categories of teachers–'young' and 'old'. While agreeing that a generation gap does exist in the family, the society and the work-place, let us examine some of her basic premises. She talks of how the 'old' teachers block reform since they have become set in their habits. The underlying assumption romanticises the 'young' teachers as the torch-bearers of reform– a generalisation that is too sweeping and hardly makes any sense. She refers to the 'young' teachers' sense of alienation since 'the system of academic rewards...favours older teachers over younger ones'. (p.9) She refers specifically to the question of time (number of years of teaching) deciding the issue of promotion. One can only tell Prof Das that her 'young' teachers would have joined, grown old/bald, died/retired as 'old' teachers if the promotional scheme–born out of a protracted struggle–did not exist. Prior to it, Prof Das' 'good young ones' became the 'bad old ones', given a system where not a single promotion was possible in a teaching career of 35/40 years. Mercifully, as of today, Prof Das' 'good young ones' have, at least, a chance of becoming readers, along with her 'bad old ones' through a process of selection. And, if Prof Das was genuinely interested in recognising the talent of this section and providing it space and recognition then she would have conceptualised a faster promotional track.

And, how does Prof Das intend to solve the problem of alienation ? By 'empowering the teacher'. (p.7) And, what would the 'empowered' teachers do ? Frame a set of 'core' and 'elective' courses for each college, which would be ratified by the college academic committees and 'monitored' by the inter-disciplinary and the course committees of the University, respectively. The foundational courses would be designed in line with the present system of cooperation between the subject development committees and faculties. We are told about various innovative courses like agricultural pesticides, desk-top printing, video production, infant management in creches, etc. (p.25)

Besides the obvious fact that Prof Das' discourse advocates the emergence of 'centres of excellence' and 'autonomous colleges'—thus, she refers categorically to a college designing an 'elective' course if it 'has a strong competence in a specialised field' (p.24)—in the name of academic renewal and 'empowering the teacher', these ideas can prove to be devastating. Prof Das should have looked at the question of vocationalisation of education and the results it has produced before suggesting these innovations. There would also be the question of resources in an age of resource crunch we are told about, at the outset. Moreover, will not 60 different 'core' and 'elective' courses at 60 odd institutions reinforce the already existing heterogeneity and precipitate a major crisis of standards since mass exams, as she opines, will be replaced by college level evaluation? (p. 25) Is it fair to link innovations in the syllabus to pressurise and cripple undergraduate students with 24 courses in three years ? And, coming from someone who feels that the colleges have almost reached a 'sick industry' stage, as we have seen earlier, it is difficult to understand how these changes would lead to any academic renewal. After all, the same individuals and institutions are expected to implement these changes. And, finally, one fails to grasp the meaning of 'empowering the teachers'.

While talking of students, Prof Das refers to women students who should be made ready to face problems like dowry, violence and unexpected deaths. The Delhi University has a system of Women's Development Centres which can play a crucial role in such matters. However, given the fact that they are not governed by any principles or clearly defined rules, most of them function on an ad-hoc basis, exposed to the whims of the authorities at the colleges. Perhaps Prof Das ought to have devoted some space to discuss their renewal in her Report.

Prof Veena Das ends her discourse referring to a point she had articulated at the outset—the question of resources. As she postulates, if her suggestions are acceptable then the resources can be raised. Isn't this like putting the cart before the horse? More importantly, if Prof Das' recommendations were to be implemented even superficially, they would have the exactly opposite effect of what she hopes to achieve—the complete alienation of those connected with the pedagogical process. ■

J.C.KAPUR : Message from Rio

(Continued from page 13)

THE object of the above narration is to give some indication as to what went on at the Rio Conference. The overwhelming impression which came through was that a section of the developed countries, particularly the United States, came to Rio to assure continuity of "business as usual" and the countries of the South to collect resources for development and reparation for the damage being done to the environment by those who are consuming most of the world's resources.

Before any active action can be taken on the world environment, we have to shatter some of the myths which are conditioning the thinking of many in creating a new human order. We have also to shatter the illusion that the centralised action by international agencies is a solution to these problems. The issues of commerce appear far more important than the environment and the conference should therefore be judged as such . It failed in its grand endeavour because the short-term perspective which conditioned the political and economic thinking of the leaders could not be reconciled for universal action on the environmental realities.

What is needed is a clear-cut long-term perspective which will lead the world away from the drift towards an unsustainable order and the realisation that without such an understanding a hundred conferences such as at Rio without focus and commitment, cannot make even a minute dent on the issues which confront human future.

The issues of environment are basically micro issues which ultimately aggregate into universal issues seeking solutions, which Rio was expected to provide. But the real action on environment lies with every individual, village, community and society. It has to reach hundreds of millions of people around the world to play their role in reversing these destructive trends. And the prerequisite for this will be an international acceptance of the desirable standards and qualities of life and not consumerism and armament riding the tiger of excesses and depressions. But the Conference at Rio neither wholeheartedly accepted nor agreed on the problems nor sought solutions. And it turned out to be a congregation of mutually neutralising voices of narrow as against human interests.

'Though the captains and kings have now departed and the tumult and the shouting has died down' the dance of the cosmos continues unaffected by the arrogance of the armament-protected consumerism disfiguring and making uninhabitable the only living planet that we know of. I hope the Rio Conference will be a warning to the devotees of "business as usual" that the party is coming to an end whether it will be through diverse voices finding a focus or the system disintegrating from within. The message from Rio may thus snowball into an uncontrollable avalanche uniting billions around the world to save the future generations from the approaching man-made cataclysm.

Solar energy in all its manifestations such as wind, water and bio-mass (in spite of the efforts of some to project nuclear energy as a renewable source) and technologies for their harnessing and applications are all part of the solution to the problem of environment. So long as the decision-makers will only remain concerned with interests and discussing or distorting issues, the development of solar energy will remain subdued. It is thus our responsibility not to act as fiscal refugees in search of a patron but the custodians of innovations and knowledge whose time is fast approaching. This spirit alone can sustain and guide the solar fraternity to its role in environment, and the destined future. ■

Foreign Earnings Position in the Public Sector

S.K. SHARMA and ANJU RANI

According to the American Marketing Association "marketing is the performance of business activities that directs the flow of goods and services from producer to consumer or user". In this definition an attempt has been made on the flow of goods and services that may be provided by the private as well as the public sector. When a firm enjoys sufficient freedom to design its production, marketing and distribution efforts, it is considered to be a case of the private sector but when the involvement of the government in production, marketing and distribution of ideas, essential goods and services is significant it is called the public sector. One expert put his view about the public sector (enterprises, undertakings) as the following:

> *By State undertakings is meant the industrial, commercial and economic activities carried on by the Central Government or by the State Government and in each case, either solely or in association with private enterprise, so long as it is managed by a self-contained management.*

The objectives of public enterprises in India, to quote the late Prime Minister Pandit Nehru, are :

> to gain control of commanding heights of the economy; to promote critical development in terms of social gain or strategic value rather than primarily on considerations of (monetary) profits; and to promote commercial surpluses with which to finance further economic developments.

Over a period of more than four decades, the growth of the public sector enterprises has been phenomenal in terms of investment and production, as well as the scope of activities. From only five enterprises as on April 1, 1951, it has gone up to 248 enterprises as on March 31, 1990 with an investment of Rs 29 crores to Rs 1,03,000 crores. This paper gives a brief account of the foreign exchange earned by the public sector through export of goods and from services with their utilisation for production and maintenance and to suggest the various measures to maintain the balance between need for foreign exchange and its foreign earnings.

Contribution of Public Sector in National Production

Public enterprises have played a catalyst's role in several sectors, specially the production of fuel, basic metal industries, non-ferrous metals, fertilisers and communication and equipments. The public sector's contribution in the national industrial production has been shown in table No. 1. This sector has provided 100 per cent contribution to the national production in case of lignite, petroleum crude, copper, primary lead and teleprinters. Coal production was more than 98 per cent in 1988-89 as against the percentage of 17.66 in 1968-69, registering an improvement of 455 per cent over a 21 year period. In case of nitrogenous and phosphate fertilisers, the position is altogether different with a declined percentage from 73.85 and 25.24 to 42.80 and 24.50 respectively during the same period.

TABLE NO. 1
Public Sector Contribution in Industrial Production

Items	As a percentage of National Production	
	1968-69	1989-90
Fuel		
Coal	17.66	98.06
Lignite	100.00	100.00
Petroleum Crude	50.83	100.00
Basic Metal Industries		
Steel ingot	57.14	58.40
Saleable Steel	55,74	56.00
Non-ferrous Metals		
Aluminium	-	52.70
Copper	-	100.00
Primary Lead	100.00	100.00
Zinc	80.59	86.40
Fertilisers		
Nitrogenous	73.85	42.80
Phosphate	25.24	24.50
Communication Equipment		
Teleprinters	100.00	100.00

Source : *The Economic Times*, April 25, 1991, Mid-Week Review, p. 15

Foreign Exchange Earnings by PSEs

Public Sector enterprises have been providing a good amount of foreign exchange through export of goods and services. The share of foreign earnings by the public sector in India's total export earnings increased from 20.05 per cent in 1968-69 to about 34 per cent in 1974-75. During the nine year period, that is, from 1980-81 to 1989-90, public sector export earnings increased from Rs 2143 crores (representing 31.9 per cent of total exports) to Rs 6366 crores (representing 23.0 of total exports).

Earnings from Goods

The export of goods in this sector was Rs 2552 crores in the year 1985-86 and shrank to Rs 2501 crores in the next year. It thereafter went up to Rs 2747 crores in 1987-88 and finally touched an amount of Rs 3088 crores in 1988-89. The public sector mainly exports minerals and metals, capital goods, industrial machinery and other equipments, etc. Indian Oil Cor-

Dr Sharma is a Faculty Member of the Department of Commerce, Manipur University, Imphal. Anju Rani is a Research Scholar in the Department of Commerce, Manipur University, Imphal.

poration was a leading exporter among the other exporters in the country. The export from the Corporation was Rs 1854.37 crores in 1984-85 but there was a sharp decline in the next five years so that in 1989-90 it came down to Rs 856.56 crores. The Corporation secured the peak in 1984-85 but thereafter it started sliding down in the next two years with a percentage of 109 and 259 respectively. Minerals and Metals Trading Company Limited and Kudremukh Iron Ore Company Limited were successful units to maintain the progressive image in terms of export. The earnings from Minerals and Metals Trading Company Limited was Rs 1102.08 crores in 1988-89 as against Rs 375.65 crores in 1984-85 thereby registering an increase of Rs 726.43 crores or 193 per cent. There was a tremendous increase in the case of National Aluminium Company Limited from Rs 15.99 crores in 1987-88 to Rs 409.32 crores in 1989-90, an upswing of Rs 393.33 crores over the two year period. The State Trading Corporation of India, Bharat Petroleum Company and Project and Equipment Corporation of India could secure the third, fifth and sixth ranks with their average of exports.

TABLE NO : 2

Major Exporters of goods among PSEs

(Rs. in Crores)

Rank	Exporters	1984-85	85-86	86-87	87-88	88-89	89-90	Average
1.	Indian Oil Corporation	1854.37	884.30	516.48	756.62	651.36	865.56	921.45
2.	Minerals & Metals Trading Co. Ltd.	375:65	613.18	714.28	730.40	873.48	1102.08	736.51
3.	State Trading Co. of India Ltd.	719.56	377-44	542-12	580.99	529.51	731.81	580.24
4.	National Aluminium Co. Ltd.	-	-	-	15.99	241.62	409.32	222.31
5.	Bharat Petroleum Co. Ltd.	87.67	102.98	115.61	109.96	119.94	N.A.	107.23
6.	Project & Equipment Co. of India	101.50	114.65	103.05	85.37	81.37	110.04	99.31
7.	Kudremukh Iron Ore Co.-Ltd.	25.34	38.33	61.96	77.62	115.81	174.41	82.25

Source : *The Economic Times*, August 11, 1990 and April 25, 1991

Earnings from Services

The services provided by the public sector have increased from Rs 1270 crores in 1985-86 to Rs 1810 crores in 1988-89. Table No. 3 presents the major earners of foreign exchange through the service sector between 1984-85 and 1988-89. Air India was the dominant earner of foreign exchange that increased from Rs 660.33 crores in 1985-86 to Rs 1078.34 crores in 1989-90, an improvement of 63 per cent during the four year period. Indian Airlines could secure the second position with an average of Rs 206.42 crores in the whole period (1985-86 to 1988-89). Earning by the Company Sector, at Rs 163.14 crores in 1985-86, went up to Rs 205.97 crores in 1987-88 and further to Rs 252.23 crores in 1988-89. The Indian Railway Construction Company Limited had an altogether different position with ups and downs. Earnings of that company happened to be Rs 158.09 crores in 1984-85, fell to Rs 94.49 crores the next year and again increased to Rs 113.31 crores in 1986-87. The Shipping Corporation of India earned Rs 89.98 crores in 1985-86 and this figure went up to Rs 294.54 crores in 1989-90. There was a remarkable increase from Rs 85 crores to Rs 177.24 crores in the period 1987-88 to 1988-89. The Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited earned Rs 98.50 crores in 1988-89 in place of Rs 78.06 crores in 1986-87.

TABLE NO: 3

Major Earners of Foreign Exchange through Services

(Rs. in Crores)

Rank	Earners (Sectors)	1984-85	85-86	86-87	87-88	88-89	89-90	Average
1.	Air India	N.A.	660.33	694.06	763.96	899.54	1078.34	819 25
2.	Indian Airlines	N.A.	163.14	204.33	205.97	252.23	N.A.	206.42
3.	Shipping Corpn. of India	N.A.	89.98	89.98	85.00	177.24	294.54	147.35
4.	Indian Railway Cons. Co. Limited	158.09	98.49	113.31	92.69	62.92	N.A.	106.50
5.	Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited	N.A.	N.A.	78.06	86.48	98.50	N.A.	87.68

Source : *The Economic Times*, August 11, 1990

Ɛarnings and Utilisations by PSEs

Table No. 4 presents the foreign exchange earnings hrough export of goods and from services with their utilisaions. The value of foreign exchange earned by the public ector was far less than the foreign exchange earnings utilised y the PSE. The earnings by the sector were Rs 3822 crores, Rs 3939 crores, Rs 4176 crores, Rs 4898 crores and Rs 6366 rores as against their utilisations (for import of raw materials, tores, spare-parts and payment of royalties, technical services, tc.) of Rs 6393 crores, Rs 5411 crores, Rs 6839 crores, Rs 7445 crores and Rs 12297 crores in 1985-86, 1986-87, 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90 respectively. In the year 1989-90 the ublic sector utilised just double the amount as compared to he PSEs' earnings. In this situation the public sector should ry to fulfil at least its own foreign exchange requirement hrough its own exports and from services.

TABLE NO : 4

Foreign Exchange Earnings & Utilisation by PSEs

(Rs. in Crores)

Year	Earnings from Goods	Earnings from Sources	Total	Utilisation
1985-86	2552	1270	3822	6393
1986-87	2501	1438	3939	5411
1987-88	2747	1429	4176	6839
1988-89	3080	1810	4898	7445
1989-90	-	-	6366	12297

Source : *The Economic Times*, August 11, 1990 & April 25, 1991

ompany-wise Utilisation

The company-wise utilisations of foreign exchange has een shown in table No. 5 for production and maintenance perations in the years 1988-1989 and 1989-90. The Indian il Corporation was the first company which utilised the reign exchange of Rs 5459.76 crores as against their earnings f Rs 865.56 crores only in 1989-90. The utilisation of foreign rnings increased tremendously in 1989-90 by Rs 4089 crores compared to the previous year 1988-1989. Air India has d a different experience, the earnings by the company ving been Rs 889.54 crores as against the utilisation of Rs 6.85 crores in 1988-89. Indian Airlines utilised a little share foreign exchange of Rs 98.28 crores in place of a handsome rning of Rs 252.23 crores in the same period. The Steel uthority of India, Cochin Refineries, Hindustan eronautics Paradeep Phosphates and Bharat Petroleum orporation had their utilisations reduced in 1989-90 as mpared to the previous year the figures being Rs 43 ores, Rs 106 crores, Rs 31 crores, Rs 103 crores and Rs 3 crores respectively.

are of PSEs and SSIs in India's Export

Our share in the world trade has steadily eroded from 1.4 r cent in 1950 to 0.5 per cent in 1989-90. In 1938 it was 3.6 r cent. Table No. 6 presents the share of small scale instries and public sector enterprises in total exports by the country from the year 1980-81 to 1989-90. As far as total exports are concerned, these increased from Rs 6711 crores to Rs 20,295 crores in the same period, registering an upswing of 202 per cent over the eight year period. The exports by the public sector have declined from 23.4 per cent in 1985-86 to 15.2 per cent in 1988-89 in the total exports from India. In individual capacity exports were Rs 3088 crores in 1988-89 in place of Rs 2552 crores in 1985-86, an improvement of Rs 536 crores in the three year period. The public sector has disappointed the country in terms of exports with declined percentages. In case of small scale industries, the percentage of exports increased by 3.5 per cent in 1988-89 as against 1980-81 (28.0/24.5). The exports by small scale industries were Rs 1643 crores in 1980-81 and went up to Rs 2785 crores in 1985-86 and finally touched almost double the figure with Rs 5681 crores in 1988-89. The exports of small scale industries were more favourable with the percentage of 28 as compared to 15.2 in case of public sector enterprises in the year 1988-89.

TABLE NO : 5

Companywise Utilisation of Foreign Exchange

(Rs. in Crores)

Name of Sectors	1988-89	1989-90
1. Indian Oil Corporation	1,370.76	5459.76
2. Air India	969.85	N.A.
3. Steel Authority of India Ltd.	658.12	615.12
4. Bharat Heavy Electrical Ltd.	596.26	674.26
5. Cochin Refineries Ltd.	493.11	387.11
6. Madras Refineries Ltd.	390.84	489.84
7. Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd.	353.19	322.19
8. Indian Telephone Industries	213.53	N.A.
9. Paradeep Phosphates Ltd.	209.59	106.59
10. Maruti Udyog Ltd.	199.89	251.89
11. Mazagon Dock Ltd.	169.66	N.A.
12. Fertilizers & Chemicals Ltd.	155.16	N.A.
13. Bharat Earth Movers Ltd.	136.00	N.A.
14. Bharat Petroleum Corpn. Ltd.	124.91	21.91
15. Indian Airlines	98.28	125.28

Source : *The Economic Times*, August 11, 1990 and April 25, 1991

TABLE NO : 6

Share of PSEs and SSIs in India's Export

(Rs. in Crores)

Year	Total Exports from India	Exports by PSEs	Exports by SSIs
1980-81	6711	N.A.	1643 (24.5)
1985-86	10,895	2552 (23.4)	2785 (25.6)
1986-87	12,452	2501 (20.1)	3617 (29.0)
1987-88	15,714	2747 (17.5)	4535 (28.9)
1988-89	20,295	3088 (15.2)	5681 (28.0)

Figures in brackets indicate percentage

Source : *The Economic Times*, August 11, 1990

Foreign Exchange eluding PSEs : Why ?

From the facts described above, it can very safely be said that the public sector enterprises position is highly unsatisfactory in terms of foreign exchange earnings, the difference between earnings (Rs 23, 201 crores) and utilisations (Rs 38,285 crores) during the last five years, that is, 1985-86 to 1989-90 being Rs 15,184 crores. The following factors are responsible for the existing paralytic situation:

1. A large number of public sector enterprises suffer from substantial under-utilisation of capacity (the enterprises operated at less than 50 per cent of their capacity for a number of years). The overall capacity utilisation of all public sector enterprises fell from 51.2 per cent in 1983-84 to 48 per cent in 1984-85. During the year 1988-89, nearly 40 per cent of the public enterprises showed capacity utilisation of less than 75 per cent, and in fact 20 per cent enterprises worked at even lower than the 50 per cent rate of capacity utilisation. The cause of this state of affairs are multifarious and range from technical to raw material shortages, inefficient operation and poor management of some enterprises, political interference in day-to-day working and industrial disputes, etc. The result has been less production and productivity.

2. Technology constitutes an important source of higher productivity. With the exception of a few enterprises, all public enterprises are today victims of technological obsolescence as compared to the developed and developing countries. The contribution by technological advancement to economic development in the developed countries in recent years has been as high as 66 per cent of growth. Production with the help of such technology (obsolete and inappropriate) is bound to be inferior in quality as compared to the production using modern and appropriate technology. A case in point is that of Scooters India. This company has suffered from mounting losses due to outdated technology. Enterprises employing obsolete and inappropriate technology are also likely to suffer cost and price disadvantages vis-a-vis enterprises employing modern technology.

Basically, because of the above hurdles, the public sector enterprises are not in a position to fulfil their foreign exchange requirements through export of goods. In this situation there has come a strong feeling that the government should not establish new enterprises and the emphasis should be laid on existing enterprises through privatisation. The concept of privatisation of the public sector enterprises has gained ground with policies of the Margaret Thatcher Government in the UK and some countries of Europe and the United States. The underlying idea of privatisation is to transfer control of the so-called government companies to non-government management.

According to our Finance Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, "there is no magic solution available for increasing the efficiency of public enterprises and that it is something that cannot be done overnight. Hence the public sector in India has no option but to pass on increase in costs to consumers, through increase in administered prices." The improvement in the efficiency record achieved by the British Airways after privatisation is often cited as an example of what a company can achieve when free from regular control.

Thus the question that arises is : why should there be investment worth thousands of crores of rupees in the public sector when the public enterprises are not in a positio utilise their installed capacity? Some people argue that government is responsible for such a pass due to its defec planning policy. But this is not true. The government tried and is trying to achieve a high and sustained rate growth, a progressive improvement in the standard of livin the masses leading to eradication of the problems of pov and unemployment and the realisation of a self-reli egalitarian society.

Upgradation of technology is essential if one has to business and survive in a competitive world. Japanese b ness organisations are earning good profit because tl products are preferred all over the world due to the use modern technology alone.

The public sector enterprises should pay more attent on research and development activities specially with a view improving their technological back-up. Expenditure on th activities went up to Rs 208.66 crores in 1987-88 in place Rs 178.25 crores in 1986-87, thereby registering growth of 30.41 crores or 17.06 per cent. Fresh doses of funds sho be provided for upgradation of technology and revamp operations. In this context the New Industrial Policy nounced by the Narasimha Rao Government on July 24,1 in Parliament has provided the terms of freer entry to fore investment and technology :

> In order to invite foreign investment in high priority indust requiring large investments and advanced technology, it has b decided to provide approval for direct foreign investment u 51 per cent foreign entry in such industries (earlier on, the li was 40 per cent).

Conclusion

To conclude, it could be said that the public sec enterprises are not only playing a prominent role in our d life in terms of fulfilling our necessary requirements of fo shelter, clothes, conveyance and various other services, tha petrol and power, but also by helping us to maintain balance-of-payments position in the country through exp of goods and from services. But as compared to small sc industries, the public sector is far from achieving the design level of foreign exchange earnings through export of good

The public sector units utilise a large share of foreign change earnings for their production and maintenance ope tions as against this meagre sum of mutual foreign exchar earnings they can record. Therefore, the public sector in Indi in need of undergoing drastic changes so as to enable it to ear handsome amount of foreign exchange through exports throu maximum production and productivity and maintenance o satisfactory balance-of-payments position to face the challen of the twentyfirst century.

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BOOK REVIEW

Mirroring Plight of Labour

AMITAVA MUKHERJEE

The scenario has now become a common sight everywhere in West Bengal. Closed industrial units. Workers idling away their time in small groups in front of closed down iron gates hoping hat some day their factory would reopen again. Behind this apparent picture grimmer situation pervades the length and breadth of the industrial areas of the State. Unable to bear with starvation, workers and their family members have been committing suicides at regular intervals. But how many of them have so far embraced this shortcut to get rid of worldly sufferings? Predictably the State machinery in West Bengal cannot be said to have come out with comprehensive figures on this aspect.

This book is a serious attempt to study the causes behind the hapless condition in which the labour has been thrown into over the years due to the debauchery and profligacy of the private sector management as well as meek acquiescence of the governmental authority and also, in many respects, unholy collusions among managements and trade unions. Divided into nine chapters, the book presents a thoroughly researched study on the evolution of labour in West Bengal, deteriorating plight of jute and cotton textile industries in the State, random trampling down of the minimum wages act, employers' offensives and abject surrenders by trade unions in the name of memorandum of understandings and also dimensions of inquiries by Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR). In the end there is a detailed list of closed large and medium industrial units in West Bengal that can help a student of the subject in getting a quick bird's eye view of the industrial scenario in the State.

Against the Wall: West Bengal Labour Scenario by Nagarik Mancha (Citizens' Forum); Spokesman, 1991; pp. 74; Price : Rs 40; International Price : $5

The usefulness of the book lies in the fact that it attempts to systematise and enrich what we already know about the deteriorating industrial scenario in the State. According to statistics provided by the State Government in 1990 itself, nearly one lakh 50 thousand workers were affected due to lockouts and closures were declared in 17 industrial units. Moreover, during the period 1984-1990 the total number of closures declared in various industrial units stands at a staggering 174 mark which affected more than three lakh families. If 1977, the year of the inception of the Left Front rule in the State, is taken as a benchmark then the figure for closures stands at 663.

The chapter dealing with jute industry, perhaps one of the most enlightening of all the chapters, successfully rebuts, with the help of statistics, the mill owners' two pleas for the sickness of the jute industry : lack of modernisation and shrinkage of the market owing to influx of synthetic packaging materials which the government and other bodies including trade unions seem to have accepted.

However, the book successfully establishes that very few jute mill owners came forward to accept the financial help, arranged by the Central Government more than four years back, for modernisation and expansion of the jute industry. Even out of the total allotted money Rs 92 crores were allotted to clear up statutory dues like provident fund and gratuity. And even though export market for jute goods had experienced a shrinkage the internal market had expanded. The book also correctly sees through the mill owners' complaints about glut in the market. However, the fact remains that about 55 to 60 per cent of jute products are directly bought by the Government of India at a remunerative price fixed by the mill owners themselves.

Euphoric words are now bandied around so far as Narasimha Rao-Manmohan Singh's breakneck attempts towards privatisation of industries are concerned. *Against the Wall, however, presents a truly revealing picture for both of them. Absolutely devoid of human sentiments, the private mill owners even did not pay the workers their statutory dues. For example, in the Victoria Jute Mill the dues to the workers amounted to Rs 11.60 crores at the time of closure—Rs 92,000 as wages, Rs 1.75 crores as bonus, Rs 7 crores as Provident Fund, Rs 2 crores as ESI benefits and Rs 5 lakhs as gratuity.*

However, the book misses one very important point behind the sickness of some of the giant units—the partisan role of the State bureaucracy while trying to prop up trade unions of particular hues that has led to widespread unrest and consequent dislocation of works in some of the best managed industrial establishments in the State. A case in point is the Philips India where the State Government had suddenly cancelled registration of a non-political union while trying to back up another union with a particular political affiliation. It was ultimately left to the court to come out with a severe stricture against the State Government and thus save the situation.

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TO any bureaucracy and its political executives desirous of meeting the challenge with utmost seriousness, this book can come as an illuminating guide. It is interesting to note in this context that the differential between minimum and maximum wages for lowest daily paid unskilled worker is extremely narrow in West Bengal. While in West Bengal the minimum wage fixed for this category was Rs 16.34 the figure for maximum wages was just Rs 17.43. The corresponding figures for Bihar was Rs 12 and Rs 23, Rs 21 and Rs 25 in Haryana, Rs 18.52 and Rs 33.30 in Punjab, Rs 12 and Rs 20 in Kerala and Rs 6 and Rs 20.58 in Maharashtra. It is noteworthy that so far as the maximum wage was concerned, West Bengal comes at the lowest in the table given in the book.

If the information and statistics in the book are to be believed then the law of the jungle has now been enjoying full sway in West Bengal. For example, minimum wages are to be revised every five years but there are a number of industries where minimum wages have not been revised even after the expiry of the stipulated period. Hosiery, cinema, printing, plastic and glass industries and saw mills are some of such examples.

In the context of the present day situation in West Bengal the argument that this book has taken a blind side in favour of workers does not hold much water in the face of the government's own statistics and assertions that the reasons given by employers behind the alarming trend towards unilateral declaration of lockouts or suspension of work were not the real causes. Labour in West Bengal, the State Government's own publication on the subject noted that lockouts were imposed by employers for extracting unjustified concessions from workers such as reduction in manpower through retrenchment, voluntary seperation, freezing of wages, etc. Interestingly, lockouts accounted for 98.5 per cent of the total loss of mandays in 1990 while strikes were responsible for 1.5 per cent.

Clearly as a fallout of all these, a new type of management-labour relationship has been developing in West Bengal. The dominant feature of it is the memorandum of understandings which have been imposed by the management on workers. The book contains quite a few case studies like the Bata India Ltd., where the workers have been made to agree to extra work without overtime facilities and their work load has been significantly increased with a strange clause that "the workmen employees will perform their normal work...which were all along their normal work". However, if the fresh list of works decided upon by the management was already part of the workers' normal work, then what was the need to remention them as normal work, the book asks. There are many other instances of employers' whims acting as preconditions for reopenings; for example, retrenchment, freezing of wages and on gratuity payments, etc.

Written with a feeling for the working people of the country, *Against the Wall* is an indictment of, not only the Government of West Bengal but the central trade unions as well. The book has presented specific cases where these trade unions have become parties to the above mentioned black MOUs. In fact it lists the corporatist roles of the central trade unions as a major constraint in regard to autonomous bargaining. "Before the Left Front came to power in 1977, this role was performed by INTUC and NLCC...after 1980, a similar role has been perpetuated by the CITU to discipline labour", it comments. However, it has not failed to note the recent phenomenon of workers' propensity to choose their own plant level leadership distinct from the ones of the central trade unions. ■

Ragging and Cultural Decadence

GARGI CHAKRAVARTTY

From rigging in elections to ragging in educational institutions—this is the grim scenario of the lumpen decadent culture before us in this country. Ragging did exist twenty or thirty years ago but not in the crude and vulgar form in which it is widely practised today. And strangely enough with higher education spreading far and wide there has been a phenomenal growth in the incidents of ragging. This places us in a quandary : which direction are we moving, we meaning those of us who claim to be "educated"?

Ragging in Ramjas College in the form of sexual harassment last year and in some other places in the form of harassment of the Scheduled Caste students attracted the attention of the media and through the media the general public. The question of disciplinary action against the culprits on the one hand and the issue of social security of the affected students (particularly the girl students) on the other compelled us to ponder over the deeprooted virus which is spreading like a cancerous disease. How is one to save the mind of an adolescent student in his/her tender age or rescue society at large from the tidal waves of the decadent culture? That seems to be the moot question today.

One needs to delve deeper and go into the roots of the problem. The kind of education prevailing particularly at the school level kills the imaginative mind of an innocent child. Cramming, overburdening, craze for high marks, excessive competitive approach coupled with the ambitious attitude of the parents—this vicious circle of the psychology of "climbing up the social ladder" slowly ruins the mind and brain of an adolescent child. The parents and other relatives, by laying too

The author teaches History in Maitreyi College, University of Delhi much emphasis on results and marks and also comparing with the other children's performance, are responsible for instilling a sense of jealousy in the minds of their children. Gradually a feeling of envy is generated in the young mind and this negative phenomenon turns into anger and apathy once frustration sets in.

Intertwined with this is the TV and VCR culture now that both are available in most homes. Parents, instead of talking to their children or reading out stories for them, prefer to get a video film from the nearby video film library and keep the children occupied. That is how the Bombay film world comes right into the drawing room practically every day. Craze for a consumer-oriented society, violence, sex, degrading music, etc. influence the mind at that impressionable age. Craving for the lumpenised filmy culture replaces love for poetry, classical music and good films and theatre as also pining for nature and everything beautiful in life. As a matter of fact the sense of aesthetics is being relegated into the background and in its place what has come to the fore is the imitation of the Bollywood style accompanied by the values inculcated by the latter. This is reflected not only in the dresses of the modern youth but also in the interior decoration of rooms in the metropolises. And this is found practically everywhere. Most of the young girls and boys are interested in imitating the dances seen on the screen of a Rekha or a Sridevi rather than a Bharatanatyam or an Odissi recital or even a folk dance from any part of the country. There may exceptions as undoubtedly there are but at this critical juncture what one is concerned with is the general trend one finds in most of the educational institutions.

The transition from adolescence to adulthood is almost complete when one enters the college. As one enters the college on the very first day itself the culture of ragging hits one on the face. There is an element of vulgarity and sadism in this ragging culture. Regardless of whatever students or teachers may say in its favour, one fails to find any justification for such a welcome to the freshers. Several people speak of seeking an alternative to this kind of welcome being accorded to the new entrants in the colleges. But the problem is not so simple.

The fact of the matter is that most students will not accept a dignified exchange of cultural gestures. On the other hand, vulgar jokes, physical, mental and even sexual harassment evoke warm response with waves of laughter! Gone are the days of subtle humour, warmth of heart, fellow-feeling. What kind of pleasure does one get by asking a fresher, as had happened at the IIT in Kharagpur, to walk on the rampart of the hostel's terrace at the middle of the night ? The boy fell on the ground below, suffered serious injuries and lost his consciousness. Who was responsible for the loss of the bright future of a young boy ? There are many cases of similar casualties in different cities, particularly in the professional institutions. Who are to be blamed? The teachers, parents, the new society with its degraded values. Can we remain silent spectators of such a degradation? Politicians can gamble with power, but educationists have no right to play with the lives of the students. The process of countering this wave of vulgarity—manifest in ragging, eve-teasing, bride—burning—needs to be initiated now and now itself.

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RABINDRANATH Tagore began his meaningful experiment with education and culture by launching a new methodology of imparting knowledge at Santiniketan. It was Viswa-Bharati, the first international university in India where both boys and girls studied together, danced together, sang together, stayed together. The magnificent cultural atmosphere of the coeducational institution was a living testimony of what cultural values a towering figure of vision and imagination can propagate. Tagorean aesthetics apart, at a later stage during the period of P.C. Joshi's stewardhip of the communist movement in the country the cultural regeneration sought to be brought about by the IPTA succeeded in creating a new awakening. This is our heritage.

Whether we should revive that past or evolve a new form of cultural expression suited to the present-day conditions and thus help the process of developing a new set of healthy values—are issues that we need to seriously discuss. Mere jargons like progressive culture or people's culture will not suffice in today's context. They cannot work anymore. How to help the young minds to discard the decadent cultural vulgarity reflected in the ragging phenomenon and open up avenues for their attraction towards cultural values that cultivate beauty and taste—that perhaps is the major challenge before us today.

But from where is this process of renaissance to begin? At the college level or the higher level of education the mind is set and notions become fixed. The process of imitating the obnoxious 'rich' begins at home or at school at a very early age. Therefore school education, orientation of school teachers and parent orientation camps may not be sufficient to counter the 'video'culture. And yet efforts in that direction must be undertaken in right earnest. Prominent media personalities, who occupy important positions in the various decision-making committees, have a key role to play in this regard. So have cultural luminaries who need to come forward with more innovative programmes and more often on the streets. Their performances should not be confined to closed door programmes at the Kamani Auditorium or Shri Ram Centre. After all, children of various schools, government as well as public, and colleges must be exposed to that kind of cultural awakening.

A very interesting phenomenon of the ragging culture is that children of the affluent society who studied in public schools were found articulately arguing in favour of ragging on TV. On the other hand, students from struggling low middle class families were literally disturbed over this encounter. They were quite opposed to ragging in the way it is being carried out these days, although they were unable to convey that fluently and forcefully on the screen. Some others spoke of permitting "mild" ragging. This is tantamount to extending tacit support to all that was happening in the name of ragging. In fact any such adjective is a relative term, something may be "mild" to me, but harsh to another person.

The University of Delhi has, through ordinances on ragging (Ordinance XV-C) and discipline (Ordinance XV-B), banned ragging. But the awareness campaign is far more important than just issuing ordinances. There could be legal loopholes on the question of punishment; and the most difficult barrier to surmount is the problem of social inhibition which prevents the girl students from giving evidence against the culprits responsible for tormenting the victims. This is where the issue of social security of the victims comes into focus. This issue cannot be ignored particularly in the light of incidents in which acids have been thrown on the faces of girl students (as happened in Calcutta sometime ago), or the latter have been threatened with dire consequences that could ruin their future life. (Only a few days ago girl student in the Calcutta University's Department of Journalism was reportedly attacked with a razor inside the university campus itself.

This is, therefore, a highly serious matter. The problem too is deeprooted. But one has to search for methods to tackle such problems regardless of the uphill nature of the task. In my opinion it is time to launch a new value-oriented campaign of mass cultural awakening which alone can help to effectively combat the basic malaise accompanying the phenomenon of ragging. It is indeed a crime to remain indifferent to whatever is happening before our eyes and silently watch the society lose its bearing, destroy its ethical values and slowly move towards degeneration. ■

(Courtesy : *The Hindustan Times*)

AFGHANISTAN

No Respite in Quick-sand War

D.R. RAJAGOPAL

Even as the quick-sand war drenches Afghanistan, again and again in blood, savagery and carnage (not seen the past 14 years), *a new prayer* is being offered everyday by most Afghans and other devout folk at the *Blue Mosque* (as hallowed as the Jama Masjid in Old Delhi), not far from the Kabul river and also at tens of hundreds of other mosques in the country, suffused with too much history:

"*Please, God, take away your seven donkeys,*" says the *new prayer*.

"*And,*" the supplicants, with rising faith, hope and expectations, pray, "*please, give us back our cow.*"

The reference, is unmistakeable: the seven factions of Sunnis and Shiites (or Shias, formerly based in Peshawar), who constitute the *mujahideen*, with their heavy military hardware and combat experience, have singularly failed to bury their differences and produce and establish a stable administration in Kabul, ever since the strongman and former chief of state, Dr Najibullah, stepped down on April 13, 1992.

It's no reflection on the piety, faith, hope, confidence and expectations of the Afghans that their *new prayer* hasn't been answered. Not completely, though,For, given the historic, inextricable Indo-Afghan ties, cemented by blood, religion and inter-racial and inter-religious family ties, it's most appropriate and indeed inevitable, that India has, as always, even now been forthcoming in the Afghans' plea and prayer for quick humanitarian aid and assistance.

Equally, it's a measure of the political bankruptcy and administrative ineptitude of the ruling Afghan *mujahideen* elite that the Shariat Law — revered and/or dreaded both by the clerics or clergy and the laity—has been slapped on Afghanistan, while her real, immediate and indeed desperate problems are :anarchy, chaos and civil war, and death.

Thus, public hanging, however sterile and grisly or commonplace even though it comes after a lapse of 20 years, of three Afghan criminals is hardly a realistic diversionary ploy for either the chief of state, Prof Borhanuddin Rabbani or the young Defence Minister, Commander Ahmad Shah Masood (a Tajik Shiite).

For, among the worsening daily problems of Kabul are: lack of drinking water supply, lack of electricity, lack of barest essentials of foodstock supplies and medicine, This, as reality bears out, has come about principally because of the savage war launched by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar (a Pathan or Pakthoon Sunni), spearheading armed forces of his Hezb-i-Islami.

In any event, the two Afghan stalwarts, who have experienced life in the raw and real, having raced to the forefront and got bogged down, are amidst political brinkmanship and one-upmanship. The two armed prophets of Islam would, between themselves, be able largely to decide the pattern of the forthcoming conflict in Afghanistan.

While Masood is the quintessential Afghan soldier, who is keen on consolidating the gains of the majority ruling Jamaat-i-Islami, without any more bloodletting and slaughter of the innocents, Hekmatyar is obviously under covert and overt pressure of the highly-politicised Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence, which has been his moral/political/emotive/military/financial backbone since 1978.

Thus, the future alignment of political/religious forces, which would broadly be determined by what Masood and Hekmatyar are capable of accomplishing, during the current "lull" in the civil war, would draw the ISI (through Hekmatyar, of course) as an element of disruption and delay.

Hence Islamabad (read, ISI under the conflicting command of General Asif Nawaz Janjua and Brigadier-General Hamid Gul) would largely determine the extent of suffering inflicted on Afghans through countless rounds of fighting for political clout and its consolidation by both Masood and Hekmatyar.

If the past is any reliable guide, it is inevitable that Masood's patience, moderation and battle-strategy and combat experience would triumph over Hekmatyar's (read, the ISI's) military hardware, bravado and bellicosity. ■

A LETTER TO K. ASHOK RAO

ARVIND SIVARAMAKRISHNAN

This is a letter to Mainstream *for publication. It comes from Dr Sivaramakrishnan who is a Fellow in Political Science and Public Administration at the Centre for Economic and Social Studies, Hyderabad, and an Honorary Fellow in Politics at the University of Southampton.* —Editor

I read your plea for the public sector ("Letter to the Prime Minister" dated January 20,1992, reprinted in *Mainstream* of July 25,1992), with sympathy and a deepening sense of dismay. I too have been a public-sector official and a street-level one at that, not in India but in the increasingly battered, underfunded and now virtually paralysed British public services. I too have felt political pressure and have heard dark mutterings of corruption, financial and otherwise, in high and not-so-high places. I too have known the simple fear that talk of privatisation, contracting-out, and the like can bring to public services—not to mention the settling of old scores, of longstanding vendetti, under the often spurious banners of rationalisation and efficiency. As I read on, I thought, yes, I've been there too.

Yet your letter, thoughtful and careful though it was, left me wretchedly depressed. You never once pointed at the miserable failures of privatisation elsewhere, at the crumbling infrastructures of the British and United States economies, at the fact that private entrepreneurs do not want to go anywhere near anything that does not first and foremost make them money. You never pointed at the perfectly accessible accounts of increasing numbers of the homeless sleeping on the streets of London, New York, and goodness knows where else. You never pointed at the perfectly public accounts of privatised laundry services sending still-bloodstained linen back to NHS hospitals and then going bust alongwith thousands of other British businesses.

Well, all right, as a distinguished citizen of the former Soviet Union said to me recently over a meal in an English city, we wish we had your problems. So must many an Indian think when looking at the G-7, the EEC, and the other rich countries' clubs. So why didn't you talk of the things we Indians do, not just well but brilliantly, and in the public sector at that? For example, we can run a railway like nobody else on this planet can. Indian Railways constitute a towering achievement, but you did not mention them. (We could run a railway system half-way across the galaxy, and there'd be dosas and hot coffee on the platform at Proxima Centauri at any hour of sidereal time. Try finding any sign even of human habitation at Basingstoke station on a winter Sunday afternoon. I should know, I've done it.)

And of your better examples, why just the DTC? Why didn't you fling the Bombay buses and Pallavan, the pride of Madras, in the faces of the privateers? Let them come from their motor-car cultures, with their violence-riddled subways and their pathetically under-used and grossly overpriced railways, and try to run Indian Railways or Pallavan buses.

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ALL right, you've got your work cut out just staying afloat, let alone counter-attacking. But I put it to you, and do so as a colleague, that the politicians would not dare touch public services that had real public support from the people who matter—the public. Have you never been at the receiving end of Indian public services, never endured the supercilious complacency, the utter contempt, the too-often obvious and crass incompetence, never suspected dirty work behind the scenes, never seen an official plainly indifferent to the bullying, the shoving, the queue-jumping, the backhanders and the thuggery just the other side of the counter? Never seen it? You've got to be joking.

Yes, I know I've been lucky. I am one of the professional classes, that sharp-elbowed lot who apparently know exactly what they want and just how to get it. I have to wait, but the official behind the counter usually does stamp my papers or sign them or whatever, and does so without wanting bribes, backhanders, or any other favours. And when I utter my unvaryingly polite—and I hope friendly—"thank you" in any one of the three Indian languages they look up, stunned. But I mean it. I am simply grateful for the return of my papers, stamped, signed, or whatever. But have you ever thought of the hundreds of millions of our less fortunate fellow-citizens for whom anything to do with the public sector, public services, or bureaucracy is only ever the subject of the silent, savage resentment and bitterness of the truly dispossessed? And of what have they been dispossessed? No more and no less than the services of those whom they not only pay but whose work they legitimise. They know the score as only the powerless can.

Tell me, if you wish, that you'd do your job properly and well but for political interference and but for the virtual certainty of having your career destroyed if you tell the truth about all that. But when did you mention, say, a constitutionally-protected public-interest defence for public servants who blow the whistle on dirty work? I hope I am wrong, and that the idea has crossed your mind.

Colleague, I do not know what more to say. But I do know that unless we make the public services a sight better for the public, you and I will be out on the street. So will hundreds of thousands of our colleagues. And we'll have asked for it—mate. ■

COMMUNICATION

Why JPC Proceedings should be Open to Media

There is at least one case where two successive Chairmen of Railway Board gave contradictory evidence before the Public Accounts Committee in the seventies. The case was about commercialisation of Diesel Locomotives with Suri transmission. It took sometime for outside experts to realise that the earlier witness fed the parliamentary committee with wrong information. At that period of time, the Lok Sabha Secretariat had a Joint Secretary originally from the Railways. This was also the first case where the PAC—then headed by Prof Hiren Mukherjee—heard a non-official witness on a matter arising from the Audit Report.

If the evidence is taken before the JPC in presence of the media, there will be less chance of incorrect and inadequate information given to the body remaining unchallenged till the time of publication. Since the beginning of World War II Parliament generally avoids printing of evidence submitted before the committees. The Mirdha Committee can hold the proceedings other than examination of witnesses in camera. Similarly, most of the memoranda coming from organisations other than the CBI, RBI and the like should be made public for simultaneous examination by the citizens.

September 5,1992
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Dipak Basu Chaudhuri

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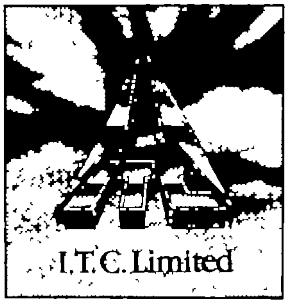

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REVIEW OF SASHI JOSHI'S BOOK 31

EDITORIAL

Exceptional Step?

An unrepentant N. Janardhan Reddy has finally agreed to step down from the Chief Ministership of Andhra Pradesh. He remained reluctant to quit till the very end resisting the pressures mounted from the Prime Minister's Office and the headquarters of the Congress President in New Delhi. Even in his letter to P.V. Narasimha Rao seeking permission to resign he maintained that the Andhra Pradesh High Court had only made "some references about me" in the private medical colleges case. These, in his view, "relate ..to the norms of business and not to any mala fides".

In the face of such an approach the firmness shown by the Prime Minister in insisting that Janardhan Reddy must resign was doubtless noteworthy. The High Court, in striking down the State Government's orders allowing the establishment of 12 private medical and eight private dental colleges (wherein 50 per cent of the seats were to be filled through the management quota involving capitation fees) as unconstitutional, had specifically reflected on the Chief Minister's role in the sordid episode. Its confirmation of 'bias' on the part of Janardhan Reddy in sanctioning a medical college and a dental college to the Janapriya Educational Society in Nellore with which his wife and brother are associated was an outspoken criticism of the Chief Minister's behaviour. By his interpretation of the court verdict Janardhan Reddy has all the more placed himself in the category of those elements in the ruling establishment who are ever ready to ignore, if not flout, judicial strictures with impunity.

The Prime Minister's speedy moves to change the Chief Minister in Andhra Pradesh were commendable much as they lent strength to the belief that he is by and large interested in ensuring probity in public life. However, what cannot be overlooked is the fact that that belief has at the same time been somewhat undermined by the contrast revealed in his attitude towards C.K. Jaffar Sharief, the Union Railway Minister, despite the Delhi High Court's unambiguous pronouncements on the railway bogies deal. Moreover, the evasive stand taken on the issue of getting T.N. Seshan, the Chief Election Commissioner, transferred in view of the latter's endless display of misdemeanour and high-handedness threatens to adversely affect the credibility of the Narasimha Rao Government as a whole.

Unless the Prime Minister acts with equal promptitude and adopts similar measures in the aforementioned cases it would be difficult to remove the suspicion that his action in *l'affaire* Janardhan Reddy was an exceptional step intimately related to the Congress' factional politics in his home State. Despite the best of intentions he would then once again fail to carry conviction with the public at large that he is really keen to revive the spirit of value-based politics in today's dismal scenario marked as it is by allround degeneration and decay.

September 23 *S.C*

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Face of Debt Politics

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

Our Finance Minister seems to be in his elements at the moment in Washington. In the bracing environment of the World Bank and the IMF he is exuding ecstacy, collecting kudos for faithfully carrying out the Fund-Bank mandate of the Structural Adjustment Programme. And he has asked for a massive loan of nine billion dollars, a feat of record-breaking begging, unprecedented in the case of any country, certainly unheard of in the case of this country. Our debt burden had already accumulated over the years to the near-astronomical figure of nearly eighty billion dollars, and now the Finance Minister wants to add nine more billions to it by 1995. At this rate we may be nearer to the grand sum of a hundred billion dollars of indebtness by the end of the century.

This beggar's bowl mission of our Finance Minister may be resented to by quite a few of his countrymen. There have already come out loud and clear voices of protest. There is good ground for getting concerned about it, because as any person of common sense would know, this would mean back-breaking debt servicing for generations. In other words, the danger of making the country a bonded debtor. What is extraordinary is that Manmohan Singh could display the same felicity three years ago in warning against the horrors of the debt trap when he was the Secretary-General of the South Commission. Perhaps in his calculation, public memory is shorter than it actually is.

In one sense, there should be appreciation of the Finance Minister's heroic efforts at securing such massive loans. This would certainly bring relief to his harassed soul in finding the means for large-scale imports in services and goods that his new economic policy demands—no matter if exports are not picking up and imports going up, belying all his budgetary calculations. Obviously the so-called globalisation of our economy as per the Fund-Bank prescription which he has adhered to in toto, envisages more borrowing all the time.

Mainstream

With this issue Sumit Chakravartty is the Editor of Mainstream.

However, to ensure continuity of the role the journal has played since its inception Nikhil Chakravartty will be its Editorial Adviser.

It may be recalled that C N. Chitta Ranjan was the first Editor of Mainstream *at the time he and Nikhil launched this periodical in September 1962.*

When Chitta Ranjan was called upon to shoulder new responsibilities in a well-known newspaper, D. R. Goyal functioned as the Editor for a certain period. In 1967 Nikhil formally took over as the Editor, a post he held till this day and is now relinquishing.

All the talk of economy measures—let alone austerity—which was heard of last year at the time of the balance of payments crisis, have nearly been forgotten as the government is becoming well and truly a debt addict. Only the budgetary cuts in social welfare, education and health are being enforced without deviation. Even the World Bank's own annual report for 1992 warns against the danger of neglecting the poor who are going to be hit by some of the features of the new economic policies, while Manmohan Singh seems to be oblivious to the deleterious effect of the cut in social service spending.

Apart from the such cuts, the Structural Adjustment Programme demands withdrawal of all subsidies, because we are being lectured to that all subsidies militate against the principles of the market economy except of course in the case of the massive subsidy earmarked for the American farmer. Incidentally, it is worth noting that while the Indian farmer is sought to be deprived of subsidy for fertiliser and energy by the Fund-Bank directive, the US Administration is prepared to risk an economic warfare with the European powers in defence of the subsidy enjoyed by the American farmer.

It is not necessary today to dilate upon the benefits that have begun to flow from the Finance Minister's new economic policy as laid down by the World Bank. Apart from the price rise of all the basic necessities of the common people, including the latest hike in prices of petroleum products, leading to increased indigence of the low-income groups—who constitute the overwhelming majority in our country and hence the backbone of our democracy—the threat of the imposition of the Exit policy has confronted millions of workers and employees in the industrial sector with the prospect of being thrown out of jobs in a system which is already afflicted with growing unemployment.

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ALL the pep talks administered by the government tha nobody would be thrown out of jobs under the Exi policy have carried little conviction with the potentia victims of that policy despite all the fanfare about th setting up of a National Renewal Fund. And once ther starts job cuts in the government enterprises, there i little doubt that the corporate sector would vigorousl follow that course. This opens up the eventuality o large-scale social tensions and disturbances as the mas of unemployed workers can hardly be expected t remain a docile contingent, their embittered state cannot but add up to the minus points for political stabilit

The gusto with which Dr Manmohan Singh has been conducting himself in his current begging mission reminds one of the caption of a hot-seller in the thirties, *To Beg I Am Not Ashamed*. But for a man in the street in this country proud of his status as a free country, such an attitude hurts. This is not part of a Left criticism of the Finance Minister. This very week delivering the Govind Ballabh Pant Memorial Lecture in the Capital, another economist, no less distinguished, who had served the government with distinctions, Dr. I.G.Patel, touched on this very point of public perception of large-scale foreign borrowing:

> The man in the street certainly did not feel proud of those who negotiated aid. I remember receiving a letter from my father a few months before his death in 1963. He said be felt very proud of me when I was sent abroad so often for what thought was important work. But when he discovered that I always went abroad to negotiate a loan, he felt ashamed. He asked me to give up my job as he had not raised a son to get the country more and more into debt.
>
> A few years later, I had a similar admonition from may father-in-law, the much-respected and how much missed, Prof A.K.Dasgupta. In my Shastri Memorial Lecture on Foreign Aid I had referred to a conversation in which I had said that I was not ashamed of begging for my country as, after all, I was not begging for myself. Prof Dasgupta could not understand how I could be so insensitive as to think that the self-respect of the country was less important than my own.

Despite the fact that Dr Manmohan Singh has not bathed himself with glory by swallowing lock, stock and barrel whatever the Fund-Bank moneylenders laid down for structural adjustment of the Indian economy, there is, however, no gainsaying that the model of economic development that the country has been pursuing for several decades now imposes its own compulsions. On one hand, it generates economic disparities, thereby wideningthe gulf between the affluent and the impoverished. On other hand, experience has shown that it has to continuously fall back upon external borrowing because it has so far failed to generate resources adequate for its programme. In other words, growth of the economy under this dispensation intensifies social inequity, while the country's independence is constrained by the inevitable dictates, covert or overt, of the moneylender abroad.

Our economy has therefore already reached the crisis point. Its capacity to serve the common humanity of this country is fact getting eroded: instead, it has been accelerating the process of alienation of the small minority at the top from the overwhelming majority of our people. And with it has also come the threat of the country being turned into a bonded debtor to the powerful moneylending agencies of the world.

All this demands from the thinking sections of our society drawn from all walks of life — politics, professions, the university campus, the media and social activism — to redesign the entire concept of development which will enable the upliftment of the majority of our society, alongwith a norm of living that takes into account the urgency of protecting the environment. In short, a fresh urge for a new paradigm of development. ■

What Joint Parliamentary Committee Can Do

SUBHASH CHANDRA SARKER

The securities scandal involving the most respectable banks in the country represents the most serious breach in the security of the financial system that has surfaced so far. Both the amount involved in the episode and the number of individuals and financial institutions connected with the scandal are mind-boggling indeed. There is nothing comparable to this scam in the history of the financial system of the country or of any industrial country. It is thus of the utmost urgency that the guilty in this scandal are properly identified and punished.

Already more than four months have passed since the scandal came to light. But the identification of the guilty is as far removed as it was in April 1992. Any prolongation of the matter can only complicate this task. Unfortunately, there is grave reason for worry whether the approach to the accomplishment of this task is correct.

A newspaper report says that a demand has been made on behalf of the Joint Parliamentary Committee of all the banks to provide the Committee with a detailed statement of the contracts for the sale and purchase of securities for three years till 1992. The banks have been asked to provide 70 copies of all the statements. The report further suggests that this has created an unusual pressure on the working of banks whose xerox machines are busy making out copies. When the administration of the banks has been found to be wanting in observing due diligence in the discharge of their duties, it does not lie with the bank administration to complain against any extra work that may be necessary for them to undertake to satisfy the Joint Parliamentary Committee which has been asked to go into the scam. The question is whether within the time-frame available to the Committee and the nature of its constitution it can effectively deal with such detailed information on individual transactions of banks over a long period of three years. The thirty member Joint Parliamentary Committee constituted on August 6, 1992 has been asked to submit its report by the end of the next session of Parliament. At best, the Committee has time till the end of December 1992 or about three months from now on. Already there are hints that this time limit may be extended. That has to be prevented.

It is of the utmost necessity to recognise the proper role of a Joint Parliamentary Committee. Cearly its task cannot be routine investigation which must be left to the agencies dealing with criminal activities and the adherence to recognised financial procedures. It can be none of the legitimate functions of such a Committee to undertake investigation at the micro-level since it is impossible for such a Committee to deal with micro- level information. On the other hand, will the excessive attention to details not deter the Committee from giving due attention to the macro aspects of the scam? The question is also how far an examination of these detailed data is really relevant for fulfilling the objectives for which the Committee has been set up?

The terms of reference of the Joint Parliamentary Committee, according to the motion approved by Parliament, are to go into the irregularities and fraudulent manipulations in all the aspects and ramifications in transactions relating to securities; shares, bonds and other financial instruments and the role of the banks, stock exchanges, financial institutions and public sector undertakings, in transactions relating thereto, which have or may come to light; to fix responsibilities of the persons, institutions or authorities in respect of such transactions; in the above context to identify the misuse, if any, and the failures and inadequacies in the control mechanism and the supervisory mechanism, to make recommendations for safeguards and improvements in the system for elimination of such failures and occurrences in future; and to make appropriate recommendations regarding policies and regulations to be followed in future.

The three reports of the Committee of Reserve Bank officials headed by R. Janakiraman, Deputy Governor, Reserve Bank India, provide a wealth of factual material indicating in sufficient detail the involvement of the foreign banks, nationalised banks, private sector banks, a cooperative bank, the brokers and bankers.

The Janakiraman Committee has reported that over 20 per cent in number and 30 per cent in value of the securities transactions reported by banks and financial institutions could not be matched. The Committee has summarised the results of a study of details of securities transactions undertaken by banks during the period from April 1, 1991 to May 23, 1992. The aggregate value of transactions was Rs 12,25,722 crores, of which the ready forward deals accounted for more than half the value of transactions, as can be been from the following tables:

Aggregate Value of Transactions In Ssecurities By Banks
April 1,1991 to May 23,1992

Sr. No.	Nature of Transaction	Aggregate face value (Rs. in Crores)	Percentage share of the total transactions
1.	Ready forward*	6,32,944	51.64
2.	Outright	76,603	6.24
3.	Others	5,16,175	42.11
	TOTAL	12,25,722	

* The ready forward deal is a money market device for borrowing and lending short-term funds against lending and borrowing of assets. It is also a method by which a dealer can obtain short-term funds for financing his stock of investments.

The number of transactions ran to 79,521 of which the government securities accounted for nearly 49 per cent of the total value of transactions, public sector unit bonds accounting for 37 per cent, units a little more than 12 per cent and others about two per cent as can be seen from the following table:

Type of Instrument	NO. of transactions	Aggregate face Value(Rs in Crores)	Percentage
a) Government securities	30,135	5,98,123	48.80
b) PSU Bonds	32,541	4,54,702	37.10
c) Units	11,072	1,49,399	12.19
d) Others	5773	23,498	1.91
TOTAL:	79,521	12,25,722	100.00

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ONE should have thought that the factual information in these three reports, supplemented by the Joint Parliamentary Committee's direct discussion with the Ministers, officers of the Reserve Bank, the foreign banks, the nationalised banks, the government officers, the Securities and Exchange Board of India, the Stock Exchange executives and brokers and some selected members of the public should be adequate to enable a parliamentary committee to pinpoint responsibility for the misuse of the banking system and to make meaningful suggestions for toning up the administration of the financial sector in this country. For, the Janakiraman Committee reviewed no less than 79,521 transactions extending over a period of a little more than a year from April 1, 1991 to May 23, 1992. The Committee also provided an analysis of the bank-wise transactions of securities trading during this period as can be seen from the following table:

Name of the bank	Aggregate face value (Rs. in Crores)	Percentage
Citibank	215,179	17.55
Standard Chartered Bank	167,014	13.63
Bank of America*	151,646	12.37
Canfina	90,282	7.37
ANZ Grindlays Bank	79,497	6.49
American Express	69,191	5.64
State Bank of India	54,343	4.43
Andhra Bank	42,135	3.44
SBI Cape	32,971	2.69
UCC Bank	28,906	2.36
Canara Bank	27,879	2.27
Bank of Madura Ltd	25,729	2.10
Canbank Mutual Fund	24,223	1.98
Punjab National Bank	20,877	1.70
National Housing Bank	20,582	1.68
Others (below Rs 20,000 cr.)	1,75,268	14.30
TOTAL:	12,25,722	100.00

*Bank of America has since raised some questions about its responsibility.

The Committee has also provided a broker-wise analysis of the transactions as under:

Broker-wise Analysis of Transactions

Name of the Broker	No. of transactions	Aggregate face value (Rs. in Crores)	Percentage
Direct	24,612	463,044	37.78
H.P.Dalal	3,282	75,151	6.13
Bhupen Champaklal Devidas	3,019	67,170	5.48
Harshad Mehta	2,151	61,318	5.00
Somayajulu & Co.	1,778	43,954	3.59
V.B. Desai & Associates	2,339	37,653	3.07
N.K.Aggarwal & Co.	1,487	34,044	2.78
Batlivala & Karani*	1,998	29,388	2.40
C. Mackertich	707	18,279	1.49
Darashaw	1,098	17,470	1.42
Asit C. Mehta	703	12,762	1.04
Excel & Co.	729	8,900	0.73
G.N.Hegde	620	8,290	0.68
A.D.Narottam	575	7,519	0.61
Mukesh Babu	543	6,214	0.51
Others (below Rs. 5,000 cr.)	33,880	3,34,566	27,29
TOTAL:	79,521	12,25,722	100.00

*Batlivala & Karani has publicly challenged the finding relating to the firm.

On all accounts there was an acceleration in the securities trading after the presentation of the Union Budget for 1991-92 by Dr Manmohan Singh in July 1991. To the extent that the origin of the scam lay in the sudden and drastic change in the interest rate structure following the presentation of the Budget in 1991, these large numbers of transactions should enable the Joint Parliamentary Committee to identify the fundamental factors at work in destabilising the financial system, without again having to go into transactions of the preceding period which, even if it did disclose individual discrepancies, would not perhaps mean any significant variation in the assessment of the qualitative aspect of the management of the securities transactions of banks and financial institutions.

Undoubtedly, the failure of the Janakiraman Committee, for reasons that are far from convincing at all, to identify the persons responsible for the scam has not facilitated the task of the Joint Parliamentary Committee. The Janakiraman Committee was appointed by the Reserve Bank of India, the country's central bank, which has both legal and administrative jurisdiction over all the banks and can ask for explanation for any action taken by any bank or its officer. The Janakiraman Committee was again headed by a Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank itself and most of the members of that committee were drawn from among the serving officers of the Reserve Bank itself. All of them were acquainted with how banks function and could be expected to be able to evaluate the actions, formulate relevant points for enquiry and pinpoint responsibility of the officers concerned. By not fulfilling this normal expectation the Committee has compounded the failure of the Reserve Bank of India to discharge its proper responsibility of ensuring the integrity of the banking system in the country. For a supervisory agency it is hardly adequate only to establish the facts of a situation; it has also to trace the cause or causes leading to any aberration of the system and to pinpoint responsibility of individual functionaries with a view of ensuring the prevention of a recurrence of the malaise.

The Janakiraman Committee has left this task of fixing responsibility to the Joint Parliamentary Committee. And yet if the Janakiraman Committee, after examining individual transactions in over 79,000 cases, has not come forward to pinpoint responsibility, how can a parliamentary committee fix responsibility without examining the individual transactions? This then provides an apparent justification for the Joint Parliamentary Committee to ask the banks to provide it with detailed information on individual transactions in securities trading over a period of three years.

The question is inescapable whether there is any bureaucratic move to scuttle the enquiry by the Joint Parliamentary Committee through diversionary methods. It would be a tragedy, though, if the Joint Parliamentary Committee should succumb to this invitation to go on a fishing expedition which would lead the Committee nowhere and would thus frustrate the very purpose for which the Joint Parliamentary Committee has been set up. The Reserve Bank must be asked to come forward to identify the guilty. This is its inescapable duty. Also the utter failure of a highly controlled financial system to ensure probity should be analysed to devise a more efficient and decentralised financial structure, much more open to public scrutiny than has been the case. Also the banks and financial institutions must be brought under the audit of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India. ■

ECONOMY

Why Policy of Stabilisation has Backfired

ARUN GHOSH

What is good for the gander is hardly ever good for the goose. What is relevant for a developed economy is, therefore, rarely recommended for a developing country. Consider the following statement taken from the London *Economist* (of July 11, 1992), in regard to the US commercial bank lending:

> By the end of May (1992) commercial and industrial loans had fallen by $42 billion from their peak, in November 1989, of $644 billion. Bank holding of government securities had increased by half, to about $599 billion. Figures released at the end of July will probably show that the two crossed over in June.

In brief, the US commercial bank lending to the US Government may have exceeded 50 per cent of total bank lending in the USA by June 1992. One must add that this is part of deliberate choice by the US banks in that they have been disinclined to lend to private investors for more than two and a half years, and have preferred to invest in the US Government securities. We will return to this issue later, with reference to the Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR) in India, the Narasimham Committee Report on Financial Sector Reform (insofar as this aspect of bank functioning in India is concerned), and the Government of India's pursuit of economic stabilisation through credit curbs and a hardening of interest rates.

Consider again the following quotation from the London *Economist* (of July 11, 1992) relating to the need for stricter criteria for bank supervision:

> The Basle Committee (on Banking Supervision) is now pushing not just 'best practice' guidelines but minimum standards... Every international bank is to be supervised by its home-country authority on a global basis; none is to be allowed to operate abroad without the prior consent of both home and host countries; a home country will be able to gather information about its bank's worldwide operations; and a host country may ban a foreign bank if it is not satisfied that these standards are being met.
>
> The Bank of England presses for three further changes in its own market. It has power now to refuse or revoke authorisation of a bank... It also speaks of co-ordinating more formally with the police, customs officials, drug investigators and others. And—controversially— it suggests a new debate on whether bank auditors would be required to disclose troubling information to bank supervisors.

One should apologise for the somewhat extensive quotations, but they have particular applicability to the situation in India. For a change, we should opt for the new-found strictness of the Bank of England, not the relaxed approach of the World Bank in regard to financial sector reform. Except on one specific point, namely, the need to increase the equity base of the banking sector in relation to the volume of deposits handled—which have been sought to be introduced at the insistence of the IMF/World Bank—the financial sector reform proposals in India seek increasing "deregulation" of banking when the Europeans are endeavouring to tighten regulations. In fact, the Bank of England, stung by the BCCI scam under its nose, is asking for drastic changes which will make the banking sector subject to hitherto unimagined probes, some of them very desirable provided that the probity of the probing authorities were to be unquestioned. But mark the Basle Committee's recommendation that no bank should "be allowed to operate abroad without the prior consent of both home and host countries". Granted that this provision pertains to the possibility of bank frauds and safeguards thereagainst; but then, it would also be legitimate to enquire whether the type of operations indulged in by some foreign banks are in the best interests of the host country. When a foreign bank engages in outright speculation—as four foreign banks in India have recently been found to do *in extenso*—is the bank performing the functions of banking? And are such operations in the interest of the host country?

The author, a distinguished economist, is a former Member of the Planning Commission.

Let us go back to the first quotation cited above from the *Economist*, which appeared under the caption: "What are banks for?" The unfolding situation in the USA is categorised by the *Economist* as indicative of the "banks' waning role as intermediaries between borrowers and lenders".

The *Economist* goes on to state that "whether the government uses borrowings to stimulate growth as efficiently as business does is the sort of question of which academic careers are made". It is here that the London *Economist* reveals its bias as well as its simplistic one track approach. The *Economist* not only appears to believe that the optimal allocation of resources is best mediated through the market system, it also takes for granted the assumption that the market system will, on its own, bring about a Walrasian equilibrium. Keynes had demonstrated as far back as 1936, that this does not happen. The *Economist* tacitly admits to this possibility but resiles from it. After all, if commercial banks in the USA have, of their own volition in a free market, elected to put the savings entrusted to them by housholds into government securities, if the US banks are shying away

(*Continued on page 35*)

How Best to Recast Rajya Sabha

Serving Interests of India's Federal Polity

A.G.NOORANI

After Dr Amrik Singh's article in Mainstream *(September 19, 1992) on "Restructuring the Rajya Sabha" we are publishing the following piece on the same subject.*

—Editor

There is, generally, very little to distinguish between the debates in the Rajya Sabha and those in the Lok Sabha. But it would be a grave mistake to dismiss the Upper House of Parliament as a dignified irrelevance. It would be far more constructive to restore to it the role which the framers of the Constitution intended it to play but stopped short of setting it out fully in the text of the Constitution. It is as a guardian of the States' rights and a monitor of India's federalism. This aspect has been neglected in most discussions of this institution.

A partial recognition is evident in the very name, the Council of States, which the Constitution assigns to it as distinct from the House of the People (the Lok Sabha). Nor is it without significance that Article 249 of the Constitution empowers Parliament to legislate with respect to a matter in the State List if the Council of States has declared by a resolution, supported by not less than two-thirds of the members present and voting, that "it is necessary or expedient in the national interest" that Parliament should legislate on that matter.

When this provision was debated in the Constituent Assembly on June 13, 1949, T.T. Krishnamachari, a member of the Drafting Committee, fully shared the disquiet expressed by members of the Assembly on two grounds. One was the possibility of abuse of such a unique provision. The other was the universal trend of the Centre amassing power in all federations. If the provision was adopted, nonetheless, it was because the Assembly accepted the Rajya Sabha as a reliable check on abuse of Article 249. As Krishnamachari put it, the Centre would be "empowered by the Council of States in which the component States are adequately represented and that act of empowering Parliament is by a two-thirds majority which implied that the States agree to the Centre attracting to itself that power".

Implicit in this is recognition of the Rajya Sabha as a representative of the States and its vote as the collective will of the States.

But what is so special about the Rajya Sabha to distinguish it from the Lok Sabha beyond the fact that its members are elected by State Assemblies and not directly by the people as is the Lok Sabha, the House of the People? States do not enjoy equality of representation in the Rajya Sabha as they do, for instance, in the American and Australian Senates. Seats from each State are assigned proportionate to their respective population.

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IN the Constituent Assembly, it is the Rajya Sabha's role as a check on an impatient Lok Sabha rather than as a guardian of federalism which received greater attention. When the Constituent Assembly discussed the report of the Union Constituent Assembly, one of the leading members, N. Gopalaswamy Ayyangar, explained the *raison d'etre* of the Rajya Sabha in these terms on July 28, 1947:

> The need for a second chamber has been felt practically all over the world wherever there are federations of any importance. After all, the question for us to consider is whether it performs any useful function. The most that we expect the second chamber to do is perhaps to hold dignified debates on important issues and to delay legislations which might be the outcome of passions of the moment until the passions have subsided and calm consideration could be bestowed on the measures which will be before the Legislature; and we shall take care to provide in the Constitution that whenever on any important matter, particularly matters relating to finance, there is a conflict between the House of the People and the Council of States, it is the view of the House of the People that shall prevail.

Another advantage he had in mind was:

> We also give an opportunity, perhaps, to seasoned people who may not be in the thickness of the political fray, but who might be willing to participate in the debate with an amount of learning and importance which we do not ordinarily associate with a House of the People.

Prof W. H. Morris-Jones was, therefore, not wrong when he opined in his classic The Government and Politics of India that justification for the Rajya Sabha has always been in terms of "second thoughts" rather than "States' rights". But Article 249 and the debates in the Constituent Assembly on it show that the aspect of the Rajya Sabha as a watchdog of "States' rights" was not absent from the minds of the framers of the Constitution, either.

There is yet another indication of their awareness of that. It was the Constituent Assembly itself functioning as Parliament, before the first general elections in 1952, which enacted the Representation of the People Act, 1950. The Union Law Minister, who piloted the measure, was Dr B. R. Ambedkar, one of the main architects of the Constitution. The language used in Section 3 of the Act for prescribing qualification for membership of the Council of States is significant:

> A person shall not be qualified to be chosen *as a representative of any State*...in the Council of States unless he is an elector for a Parliamentary Constituency in that State.

It is another matter that the requirement has been evaded by shoddy methods. Section 3 envisages the MP (Rajya Sabha) as "a representative" of the State to which he belongs. In contrast, Section 4, which prescribes qualifications for membership of the Lok Sabha, speaks simply of a person to be chosen "to fill a seat in the House of the People". He is required to be a voter in "any" parliamentary constituency in the country.

If the Rajya Sabha is now endowed with a more effective role on protection of "States' rights", its role as a chamber for "second thoughts" will also improve without it becoming a "clog" on legislation. In the final analysis, the will of the Lok Sabha will prevail. But the States will have a forum to ventilate their grievances and put forth their views on legislation.

The West Bengal Government's famous memorandum of December 1, 1977 on Centre-State relations said that "in order to endorse the principle of equality of the federating units and to protect further erosion of the State's autonomy", elections to the Rajya Sabha also should be directly by the people at the same time as Lok Sabha elections; that both Houses must have "equal powers", and all States must have "equal representation in the Rajya Sabha". The first two would upset the entire scheme but the last suggestion is very apposite.

For over 80 years Sir John A. R. Marriott's book, *Second Chambers*, has been regarded as a truly authoritative work on the subject. It emphatically asserts that "whatever be the case with unitary states the bicameral system is essential to the successful working of a genuinely federal system". We need to consider how best to recast the Rajya Sabha so that the bicameralism of our Parliament truly serves the interests of India's federal polity. ■

(Courtesy: Indian Express)

The Jharkhand Imbroglio

ALOK K. JHA

S. B. Chavan's statement that forming either a separate State or a Union Territory was the only solution for the Jharkhand issue still needs to be fully clarified. The dichotomous and dubious stands maintained by Chavan and the Home Minister (on such occasions persons like these always become two-in-ones), and various national parties have further complicated the issue. As usual, Chavan did not apply his mind before opening his mouth, his statement on Jharkhand is just an another embarrassing chapter of Chavanspeak.

Whether Chavan really meant what he said on Jharkhand or not, the fact remains that a strong demand for a separate Jharkhand State has been there since(and before) independence. Apart from the various Jharkhand parties, all national parties have, in some way or the other, supported the creation of the Jharkhand State.

Is the proposed State viable? Who would benefit if it comes into existence? What will be the fallout for the truncated, 'rump' Bihar? And lastly, taking a clue from the Jharkhand problem is it the only and right solution to go on creating separate States to redress the grievances of a particular region?

The age-old demand for a separate Jharkhand State, comprising of 15 districts of Bihar and nine districts of Bengal(4), Orissa(3), and Madhya Pradesh(2) – covering a total area of 1,87,676 square kilometres. – is on the assumption of 'one people-one State'. But the fact is that the tribal and non-tribal people of the proposed Jharkhand State come from divergent religious, linguistic, economic backgrounds and political affiliations. The Santhal, for example, are not as homogeneous as it appears to be in the list of Scheduled Tribes. As in Nagaland, certain tribes are dominant in Chotanagpur owing to better education, employment and earlier exposure to the plainsmen's world; other tribes find themselves placed at a level lower than them. Then, as early as in 1938, the Adivasi Mahasabha, the predecessor of the Jharkhand Party (1950), had extended its membership to non-tribals of the Jharkhand region and presently the non-tribal Jharkhandis constitute a major part of the Jharkhand movement.

By pointing to the diversity of the indigenous population and the major role played by the non-tribal population in the Jharkhand movement, one is not suggesting that there cannot be unity in diversity or diversities act as a deterrent in State formation. The crucial fact here is the intra- and inter-tribe antagonism propagated and practised by the political elite of the region. And just giving geo-political autonomy to the Jharkhand region, in the hands of the political elites, will not be the real solution in redressing the grievances of the 'aboriginals' and 'non-aboriginals' of south Bihar. Secondly, even if a State is formed it will be, in all probability, the non-tribals like Subodh Kant Sahays, Gyan Ranjans and Suraj Mandals who would capture the political scene, leaving the central demand – 'tribal autonomy' – unfulfilled.

The history of the Jharkhand movement – from ethinicity to regionalism has been faction-ridden. From

'Mahatma' Birsa Munda to 'Guruji' Sibu Soren, politics in the Jharkhand region has always been personality-based. Not to forget the one-time great Oxford educated Jaipal Singh, who (after earning a good name as the leader of the record-making Indian hockey team in the 1928 Olympics) led the Jharkhand movement to its peak in 1949-59 and later on 'betraying' the movement joined the Congress to fight from within'! Also the urban-based Jharkhand movement has not really involved the the masses in any participatory activity, till sometime back they did not have any agrarian programme.

The continuous erosion in the electoral base of the Jharkhand parties since the first general elections is significantly reflective of them. In 1952, they polled 766,366 votes and won 33 seats in the Bihar Assembly elections. The figures for the 1985 elections were 438,000 and nine seats (out of 82), when the Congress won 40 seats from the same region. In the last elections the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, now split into two groups – Soren and Marandi – secured 19 Assembly seats. The continous erosion has taken place because of, to quote a pro-Jharkhand document, "the deep division among the tribal people, sharpened by growing stratification in tribal society, with their new middle class joining hands with their non-tribal counterparts in the Congress party and elsewhere". So deep is the inter-party rivalry that the All-Jharkhand Students' Union (AJSU), which came into existence in 1986, adopted a rule that no person could be a member of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha and the AJSU at the same time. The sharp differences amongst the Jharkhand parties on the latest imbroglio is just an extension of the earlier trends. Moreover, the exclusion of Krishna Marandi group of JMM, the AJSU, the Jharkhand People's Party, the BJP, CPI, IPF and other political and trade organisations from the talks on the Jharkhand State formation would ensure that discontent and agitations continue in the region.

Out of the 51 districts of Bihar, only 15 are included in the proposed Jharkhand State. But these 15 districts constitute almost half of the total geographical area of the State and its contribution to the State's revenue is as large as 70 per cent. More than a fourth of the total mining activities of the country is performed in this small region of Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas. And nearly a fifth of the country's total public sector is located in this region. In the private sector, besides TISCO and TELCO factories of the Tata's, several big, medium, and small industrial units are situated in this region. South Bihar produces 90 per cent of the total electricity generated in Bihar, also the coal produced in this region is the source of thermal power in many other electricity generating units all over the country. If the bifurcation of Bihar comes into being, the already dying economy of the agrarian north will collapse in one stroke. The only industrial activity in north Bihar, besides the refinery in Barauni, comprises of 28 sugarcane mills, which are actually 'dead' now. The fallout for the truncated, 'rump' Bihar is best summarised in the statement of Bihar's Chief Minister, Laloo Prasad Yadav, "If Jharkhand goes, Bihar will be left with *baloo and bal* (sand and upper castes).

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IT is an irony that in spite of the above-mentioned crucial contribution of south Bihar in the State's economy, the so-called developmental balance-sheet of Bihar has always been in favour of the north. The expenditure of revenue on the Chotanagpur region is 20 per cent (contribution 70 per cent), for the rest of the State it is 80 per cent (contribution 30 per cent). The irrigated lands in the south cover nearly five per cent, whereas in the rest of the State the coverage is 50 per cent, electrification (rural) in the south is five per cent, and the rest of the State is 40 per cent. Paved roads per 1000 kilometres is five kilometres in the south, in the rest of the State it is 20 kilometres.

North Bihar has many universities, south Bihar has only two. "There is one-high school for every six middle schools in the north, there is one high school for as many as 14 middle schools in the south," says Simon Marandi (JMM), Lok Sabha Member of Parliament. Arun Shrivastava of the Jharkhand Advocates' Federation says: "There are 21 tribunals in the State and all of them are situated in the north. To even plead for time (southern people) one has to travel 500 kilometres." Only eight per cent of the State's total storage capacity is available in the south. Despite its relative affluence and industrial potentiality, the region has only 28 per cent of the branches of different nationalised banks... the list of such gross imbalances is exhaustive.

Moreover, whatever little development has taken place in the south, the lion's share has been appropriated by, what the Jharkhandis call, the 'Dikus', the immigrant, alien exploiters, the main target of the movement. The influx of an outside population, comprising of the Punjabis, Marwaris, Gujaratis and South Indians, has led the 60/40 tribal/non-tribal population ratio in 1951 to become 40/60 in 1981. There are provisions of 80 per cent reservation for tribal and local people in training and jobs (in education, medical and engineering), but the fact is that nearly 90 per cent of the same have been filled by the 'immigrant' population.

The history of the Jharkhand region is the history of the onslaught on the "hills" by the "plains". They have suffered 'ethnocide' and continue to do so by the 'outsiders' and in the hands of their own opportunist leaders. The woes of the masses are genuine, their problems are real. But the solution does not lie in granting geo-political autonomy and throwing a separate State in the hands of vested interests.

The basis of the Home Minister's suggestion of a separate Jharkhand State is its economic backwardness. Then, by the extension of the same logic, Bihar should be the first State to become a separate country! A problem like that of the Jharkhand questions the efficacy of the working of the federal character of our Constitution and the implementation of the provisions envisaged in Schedule Five. Give the people their due share in their economy and polity. Give them a well-founded, working Panchayati Raj and India will remain integrated. ■

IMPRESSIONS

Perverted Logic

EKRAM KHAWAR

When the classical textbooks of political economy declared in no uncertain terms, that the modern state (read bourgeois) was only a committee of individuals to look after the affairs/interest of the bourgeoisie, one almost always displayed a quick knee-jerk reflex action and an inbuilt resistance in buying the logic. And even if at times, one did grudgingly agree, it was only with a pinch of salt, so to speak. That, notwithstanding the by now proven bankruptcy of such 'heretical' thoughts, if, subsequently situations by a quirk of fortuitous developments, confront one to the spectre of the same, one cannot help but acquiesce in the extreme characterisation however misplaced it might seem in the face of the proven virtues of moderation and the middle path.

The nation had barely heaved a sigh of relief, so to speak, after the scam and the near magical phenomenon and colossal exploits of Harshad Mehta than the sequence of events repeated almost on predictable lines. One thing leads to another in a maze of events and one finds that P. Chidambaram, a Central Minister of some standing in the Narasimha Rao dispensation resigns from his high office because of his indirect involvement with the major beneficiary of the scam. Not that his 'honesty', belated but coolly considered and to a large measure forced by the compulsion of the situation, goes unheeded and unacknowledged. He wins appreciation for his moral courage and Prime Minister Rao for accepting the resignation.

Still, scrub writers and journalists having a feel of the power structure, continued to smell foul play and probable subversion of truth even after the handing over of the case to the CBI. They went on whispering that what was visible to the public eye was just the tip of the metaphorical iceberg and that bigger fishes continue to swim underneath placid waters.

And as if to validate their position, V. Krishnamurthy, a highly respected technocrat, one-time proud recipient of the Asian Productivity Award and a member of the Planning Commission suddenly lands in all sorts of trouble. Soon the atmosphere is agog and the public is confronted with the unwelcome reality of his alleged involvement in 'operation fairgrowth' and the ensuing benefits to his son, comfortably settled in the USA. The journey from the Planning Commission to the Tihar jail is too lively and fresh to be recounted. But the actual wonder was that even such a vastly respected honest professional and a highly placed individual as Krishnamurthy (being a Member of the Planning Commission is no joke after all), practically finds himself at the end of the rough stick even though the public all along had extreme belief in the ability of the powerful in warding off troubles and also in the spirit of forget and forgive so religiously adhered to by the powers that be.

The public had to eat its own words and V. Krishnamurthy despite his colossal stature finds himself in deep trouble. Why do certain people grudge Dr. Manmohan Singh proudly donning the mantle of honesty by simply allowing investigation of corruption charges against a public servant? But such has been the recent journey of words and the attendant connotations have so indescribably changed that even such simple acts are proudly displayed as signboards of virtue.Sic!

Perhaps this "post-*glasnost*-post-*perestroika*-post Cold War" phase in the human history is not the right time to talk of words, attendant connotations and such archaically antediluvian concepts as vice and virtue. Did not even Comrade Deng say that so long as the cat continued to catch mice its colour hardly mattered.

As a distraction let it be known that the third interim report of the Janakiraman Committee has just been submitted and during the 14 months ending May 1992, 'it puts the quantum of investment in share market to be of the order of Rs 122,57,22,00,00,000. And if at the end of this astronomical figure one loses one's breath it is hardly the fault of the figure itself. Where does so much money come from? The true meaning of this figure may perhaps be better understood if for a brief moment one considers that the total annual budget of the Indian Union remains a paltry Rs 1,13,698 crores. Comparable too is figure of our gross domestic product of Rs 3 lakh crores. But figures after all, big or small will remain figures only that is incapable of meaning anything and hardly signifying any real value in themselves.

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STILL the foregoing does give a hint of the booty at stake and the probable extent of scam-related

(Continued on page 34)

Sham of Electronic Media Liberalisation

SOM BENEGAL

One should not be stampeded into believing that the announcement about a Broadcasting Council for radio and television and the reported acceptance of the Mahalik Committee report on programmes is a positive development towards the liberalisation of these two electronic media. Even the government has cautiously affirmed that this is the first step toward making the media "less official". It is, however, nothing of the kind. And certainly it is a far cry from the Prasar Bharati concept which itself is only a well-intentioned palliative from some benevolent media intellectuals.

It is interesting to note that the Prasar Bharati, or autonomous media corporation, was conceived in the heyday of the first Janata Government in 1977-78. Fourteen years have gone into its gestation and yet it has not produced even a mouse so far. Instead we are told that the Ministers of Law, and Information and Broadcasting are continuing (note, *continuing*) discussions on proposed amendments to it! In other words, long after the cows have come home and returned to pasture, over and over again, the cogitations will continue.

Is it some abstruse Einsteinian formulation that the Ministers are grappling with? Or is it some Byzantine conundrum about angels dancing on pin heads that they are ferociously trying to unravel?

The truth of the matter is that though actions are supposed to speak louder than words, in this case words speak louder than actions. Well, might they be trying to out – Monica Monica Seles!

The truth is that the government, any government of any hue anywhere, is not going to relax its control over any aspect of life over which it already has a grip. On the contrary this modern leviathan has such a gargantuan appetite that it will consume anything which comes, howsoever distantly, within range of its ever-open jaws. And Indian jaws today can take in the whole universe.

If there has been any sense of stampede it is by the government under the entirely shrill doomsday rhetoric of our vociferous print media and their media writers who see the problem entirely from the upper-class, West-oriented, consumerist viewpoint, now sweeping the world. Cable and satellite television, according to them, is going to deal a mortal blow to Doordarshan.

Here it is interesting to note that radio is rarely mentioned because it has become a poor eighth cousin to be spoken of only in embarrassment! The fact that radio commands an enormously larger audience in our country, indeed the world, is ignored by the lure of live television in colour. The image has taken over the message. And the message has now truely become a massage, without meaning to be clever or funny.

But as usual the stampede by the government, in its true style, is in slow-motion, almost frame-by-frame as in the new-wave French film genre thirty years ago!

Making the electronic media "less official" begs the question, why should they be official at all, less or more? This is the crux of the problem. No media of any kind has the business to be official. This does not, however, mean a kind of bonanza holiday of irresponsible licence to the media. This does not hold anywhere, not even in the much-vaunted free USA.

The Prasar Bharati concept, however much cogitated upon, will never fulfil the real demands of the Indian nation for an electronic information system which meets its essential needs. The Prasar Bharati proponents were concerned with freedom. The government were obsessed with autonomy, or at any rate mouthed it as a counter-point. Worse, later, as "functional" autonomy!

No one has defined the contours (I refuse to use the horribly misapplied word parameters!) of these two concepts. A fruitless battle has raged on the semantics of these two words. One cannot but recall at this point a seminal statement made by Lenin, a much devalued personality in some quarters today but historically a colossus, and contemporaneously very relevant. Lenin said,"When there is freedom there can be no State, when there is a State there can be no freedom."

This is the harsh reality we have to face even in so small a matter as the electronic media.

To put it briefly, autonomy means restricted freedom within certain limits, but freedom means unrestricted liberty. Perhaps the Leninist dream interpreted from Marx, another colossus, is utopian today. But autonomy as prescribed, howsoever clearly (at present it is nebulous, and of course, perhaps, deliberately so), by the government and bureaucrats can never be the answer to freedom. A dialogue between the autonomy proponents of the government and the freedom dreamed of by creative media practitioners is not just of the deaf but also on frequencies which are totally incompatible.

Already there is confusion and misgivings about this Broadcasting Council, its composition, its terms of reference and its constitution. Past experience in many

Doordarshan, Please Note

Jagmohan narrates in *The Pioneer* [September 12,1992]:

BBC/ASIA telecasts regularly a documentary programme entitled *Video Diary/Diaries*. The concept behind it is fascinating.

A fortnight ago, one such Video Diary, recorded by a thirtyish, impoverished Albanian rural doctor, was telecast. Its images, though amateurish in technique, were entrancing. The commentary, in first person singular, was authentic and fascinating.

A few words by way of background are necessary here. In 1946, King Zog of Albania was deposed and Enver Hoxha, a disciple of Stalin, came to power and consolidated his dictatorship over a long period of four decades. A curious form of revisionist socialism was enforced on the people, which was more Maoist than Stalinist as the years went by. With its increasingly isolationist and insular policies, Hoxha's Albania was a thoroughly underdeveloped country, though China extended considerable aid.

It was in this Albania, after the natural death of Hoxha, before the collapse of communism (including Albania's own brand of it) that the BBC discovered the said naive doctor. He happended to be an addict of the BBC's world radio programmes. That was his only contact with his country and the world. He was also a soccer fan and a lover of the Liverpool players, especially Gary Linekar.

The BBC correspondent based at Tirana (capital of Albania) had become a friend of the doctor. One day he thrust a handy video camera and tapes into the doctor's hands, taught him the basic mechanical operations and requested him to shoot whatever he liked, but with some continuity and thus maintain a novel diary on tape.

With great alacrity and zeal, the otherwise sad and sedate doctor took to the video camera. The telecast version enabled me to get acquainted with the members of the diarist's family, including his woman friend, have a close look at their poverty, attend a local wedding and witness the breakup of the dictatorship of Hoxha's successor, protest demonstrations, and elections for a new way of liberal, democratic life. The diarist now, and again, switched on the camera and sat before it to give his comments.

A happy postscript in the diary is about the doctor's trip to the London headquarters of the BBC, with all expenses paid, so that he could edit the diary himself. From London he goes to Liverpool and sees his favourite players and, of course, Gary Linekar. It is a beautiful story thanks to the BBC.

fields, including the media, shows that such bodies are mere show pieces meant to cover the hidden manipulations of the government and its bureaucratic mini-dictators, with a veneer of respectability and legitimacy given by the distinguished non-officials. These hapless creatures, in any case, have rarely time to give in-depth consideration to the problems placed on their agenda.

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BUT to come to the most crucial and only relevant question in this whole crisis made into a charade is: what actually is the role of the electronic media in our country, indeed in all countries facing the problems as we do. Namely, the so-called developing countries. Are we supposed to duplicate, howsoever farcically, the entertainment programmes of the West – pop-singers, rock-groups, women gyrating in scanty clothes to flashing strobes, sex and violence-related kitchen-sink dramas, space fantasies little related to any science and so on? In other words purely escapist, purely directed at visceral provocations, laced with consumerist siren calls in between? If that is the be-all and end-all, catering to one per cent of our affluent people, why then, why compete at all? Who will want to watch this Indianised fifth rate rubbish? Why waste our resources, meagre as they are to pamper fruitlessly on this microscopic minority who will, in any case, turn away? The debate is preposterous in the extreme.

Let us rather reach back to one of our most perceptive and forward looking visionaries in science, space, and social commitment, Vikram Sarabhai. He said a quarter of a century ago, even while envisaging a future "sky invasion":

> Direct broadcast of TV from a satellite represents the use of advanced technology which for the first time does not impose a penalty on account of the dispersal of the receiving units away from the urban centres.

Clearly seeing the need for reaching all sections of the population, the young and the old, men and women, literate and illiterate, the privileged and the underprivileged for the country's continued stability and national integration through this unique common mass media of communication, Vikram Sarabhai said:

> We should consciously reach the most difficult and least developed areas of the country and because they are in this state, we should reach them in a hurry.

Along with Vikram Sarabhai, many dedicated later luminaries and other rather humble devotees of our country I do not see India as a paradise for parvenu carpet-baggers and free-booters. Rather I see it as a vast land, not a waste-land, for its struggling millions to turn to a sun of reasonable prosperity.

It is for these that a television and a radio can each be a most powerful medium for redemption through education, enlightenment and, incidentally, entertainment.

Five-star lizards, and blissfully-blind voluptuaries may think it laughable that television has any other purpose than titillating their passé passions, but technology, I hope, was not designed for such people. It was meant for higher purpose. All through history, in any form, whether capturing fire, inventing the wheel or leashing the atom it was designed for man, not some selfish men.

If we see television in this light we can use it for a positive purpose regardless of the prevailing jeers all around. To ensure this without deviation from the main objective television has to be restructured in an entirely new format and a new operational matrix.

Several ideas have been floating around. The most essential *sine qua non* is that the electronic media must be wholly free from governmental control, and even remote interference. If it wishes to put forward its point of view it may stand in line with the rest and secure any time that may be available. But it cannot have a rigid monopoly and farm time out to others based on its whims and fancies and in most cases out of political and monetary considerations.

This will be anathema to the vested interests which have grown up and proliferate every hour. The recent determined entry of bureaucrats (to the exclusion of even the few professionals in the organisation) without the slightest knowledge of the elementary principles or requirements of these media shows the gross unconcern about the fate and operation of radio and television.

The development role of television as a vehicle of education and extension, as a means to enrich cultural and socio-economic life, as a tool to inspire the people to their national heritage and rich culture, their unity and integration and prosperity is not to be sneered at. I know there is a very vocal set of people who believe that television has only one role of entertainment and everything else lies elsewhere, if at all. As anyone with the slightest disinterestedness will see television is the only means which can reach our least privileged people, in a hurry to quote Vikram Sarabhai, because new technologies make it possible. It has a rare credibility, is most persuasive and requires no previous perparation for assimilation like writing and reading.

However, Vikram Sarabhai and others were quick to point out that they accepted entertainment as important, but he questioned if that was to be determined by people who had little empathy with their audience. The peoples' participation in what they wanted thus became an important ingredient of a programme.

Let it not be assumed that the peoples' participation would mean the lowest in taste, that filmi songs and sequences would be the only thing they would want. This is the arrogant assumption of the so-called elite who themselves are tasteless. The SITE experiment (Satellite Instructional Television Experiment) in the middle seventies reaching 2400 villages in six States proved to be a great success in the involvement of the disadvantaged classes of the country. This was further augmented by the so-called Pij experiment of localised broadcast in Pij in the Kheda district of Gujarat, where the villagers themselves in time learned the techniques of programme production in all its aspects relevant to their own problems. This intensely localised programme along with other national programmes beamed during the evening proved to be a bench-mark for the creative use of television for inspiring people about their own potential, giving them a sense of self-reliance, an understanding of the world around them, both national and international. Replicated around the country it would have shown the true use and power of television to carry the country as a whole forward.

But for reasons unknown the Pij experiment was abandoned. The emphasis went back to the totally infertile area of so-called entertainment and propaganda.

But, how can one call this area infertile? Surely it became very fertile for those whose primary aim and sole purpose was to use this medium as yet another source for enriching themselves through its profligate exploitation for warping life-styles and cultural attitudes to conform to the new philosophy of self-determination of the rich minority for its affluence at the cost of the poor majority?

Naturally the “sky invasion” has been both a godsend and a windfall to such people. One, it has hastened the pressure to change Indian television to conform to the West-oriented world-view sweeping the globe. Two, it has given an impetus to the practitioners, called media wizards, of this approach and its ardent promoters, the liberalised consumer industries and their allies in other fields, to embrace readily the “sky invasion” by inviting it as collaborators.

But to those who see India as more than a plaything for its new-rich *nabobs* and the misguided segment of its youth, the electronic media have to play a different role as I have already elaborated.

But how to achieve this?

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FIRST and foremost there should be no Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, and no Minister with a clutch of bureaucrats around him. The Ministry and its appurtenances must be abolished. At best there can be a Department of Information, a role fulfilled by the Press Information Bureau which doles out the news which it thinks is fit to be printed, and newspapers decide whether it is fit to be used.

The electronic media have to be split vertically between radio and television. There can be no promiscuity between the two. They also have to be split horizontally. For purposes of the present discussion I will deal only with television.

Instead of the hydra-headed monster that Doordarshan is today, television has to be further split vertically into five Independent Authorities. An Independent Rural Television Authority, an Independent Educational Television Authority, an Independent News Television Authority, an Independent Entertainment Television Authority and, finally, a National Dubbing Authority. This last will help to convert national and regional programmes understood and appreciated all over the nation — a requisite of any communication.

Again these several Authorities may be Central in character but they have to be split again horizontally so that each area, each region, can evolve its own programmes specific to its needs.

In other words, a Central-decentral matrix, in which the Central Authority oversees the broad nature of the television operation and offers counsel (but not those horrible "guidelines") and leaves it to the decentralised organisms to develop themselves according to their genius.

The essence of this approach is that only professionalism must be encouraged, promoted and allowed the maximum freedom in operation.

I am not sure that all these should be gathered together under a Television Authority of India as we would reach the same position as now in a circuitous way. Instead there may be a coordinating central agency to ensure the smooth meshing of all the Authorities and their efficient operation. Such an agency, needless to say, must have again only professional and public-spirited whole-time participants unhampered by other avocations. Also needless to say imperatively there should be no politicians and bureaucrats even within hailing distance to interfere or influence the electronic media.

The various Authorities should be set up under a benign Charter from Parliament with a specific unchangeable proviso that Parliament or its constituents will have no programme and operational control over them. They should come only under the scrutiny of the Public Accounts Committee who shall judge only their financial operations to prevent profligacy and misuse but not make any value judgements on programme content and performance. This last aspect will be naturally judged by public acceptance or rejection.

As a now-forgotten report said:

> a massive monolithic organisation cannot function effectively. Indeed, it would be unfair to expect it to do so with the deadweight of the organisation bearing down on the people operating it. It needs to be decentralised, diversified, even atomised, so that the elements can breathe more freely and operate with greater elasticity and effectiveness.

Such a set-up need have no fear of invasion from the sky or any other elements.

But is this all utopian? Or is it, as Keats said, "a vision or a waking dream?" ■

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Crisis of Socialism

Notes in Defence of a Commitment

RANDHIR SINGH

Prof Randhir Singh, one of the most successful teachers in Delhi University as a Professor of Political Theory, has now retired from the University. His book, Of Marxism and Indian Politics*, published in 1990, evoked considerable interest in intellectual circles and among activist groups. For two years now he has been speaking on the subject of the 'crisis of socialism' and has now decided, at the presistent insistence of friends, to write down his arguments. The following article is the first draft of the opening section of his proposed essay on the subject. This has already appeared in the* Economic and Political Weekly. *We are reproducing it with due acknowledgement to the* EPW *and the author's permission.*

—Editor

> *The theoretical conclusions of the Communists are in no way based on the ideas and principles that have been invented or discovered by this or that would-be universal reformer.*
> *They merely express, in general terms, actual relations springing from an existing class struggle, from a historical movement going on under our very eyes.*
>
> Communist Manifesto

> *Socialism is young...*
> *The road is long and in part unknown...*
> *To build communism, a new man must be created simultaneously with the material base.*
>
> Che Guevara

> *It is only when people get to the point of seeing that the price of contradictions is yet more intolerable than the price of ending them that they acquire the nerve to go all the way through to a consistent socialist politics...*
> *Once you have decided for revolutionary socialism, not because it is quicker or more exciting, but because no other way is possible, then you can even experience defeat, temporary defeat, such as a socialist of my generation has known, without any loss of commitment.*
>
> Raymond Williams

These are tragic, indeed traumatic times for those who still take their socialism seriously...

A long time ago, even as the modern socialist tradition, inspired above all by Marxism, had just established itself, someone as little suspect of sympathy for any sort of socialism as Ludwig Von Mises described it as the 'most powerful reform movement that history has ever known, the first ideological trend not limited to a section of mankind but supported by people of all races, nations, religions and civilisations'. More recently, even as *The Times* too noticed the truly global reach of the ideas of Karl Marx – 'there is no country in which at this moment someone is not discussing Marx's ideas', etc. – Peter Laslett, very far from being a Marxist, pointed out that the teachings of Marx 'have proved more successful than any other set of doctrines which the West has brought forth, swifter and more final in its conquest of the world than ever Christianity was'. In the meantime, even so hostile a critic as Leopold Schwarzschild seemed to sum it all up when he wrote:

> If a name had to be found for the age in which we live, we might safely call it the Marxism era.

And now!...

Many of us had known, even from afar and without visiting there for nearly four decades if not more, that it was bad, in fact pretty bad, in the countries of 'the socialist world' as it was called. We had come to recognise these regimes as, at best, aberrant or deformed versions of socialism as Karl Marx and the classical Marxist tradition had visualised it. Taking our distance, as disappointed but still friendly critics, always hopeful of a change for the better, we had learnt to speak of them, in Rudolf Bahro's more truthful though somewhat ambiguous expression, as countries of 'actually existing socialism'. Yes, it was pretty bad there, but it is only fair to confess that even the most knowledgeable amongst us did not know it was *that* bad! For now even the 'actually existing' has ceased to exist in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and is in real crisis elsewhere.

As we move into the last decade of the twentieth century, the wreckage around us is already sufficiently comprehensive not only to eliminate the so-called 'Marxist-Leninist' model of socialism as an alternative to capitalism, it has compromised the very idea of socialism, in every one of its forms, Marxist or non-Marxist, be it Trotskyism or Maoism, or reform-communism, or social democracy, or even whatever anti-Communist socialism is still around in India and elsewhere. The deluge of disenchantment has in fact put a question mark not only on the possibility of any escape from capitalism but on the validity of Marxism itself as the theory and practice of the struggle for human emancipation in our times.

As I look back upon my more than fifty years of hopeful involvement with the 'idea of communism', and as today the memory of the heroic struggles of generations of Communists and common people for a cause recedes and the reality of broken illusions, wasted lives and bloody sacrifices behind a shattered political model grows on you, one begins to doubt, if only for a while, whether hope will ever again create 'from its own wreck the thing it contemplates'!

> One almost instinctively turns, once again, to Goethe's injunction so apt for our troublous times: One must from time to time repeat what one believes in, proclaim what one agrees with and what one condemns.

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FOR me it all began in 1939...

Global capitalism, as imperialism or its fascist variant, driven by the logic of its contradictions, was inexorably moving towards yet another World War, in the process seeking desperately to destroy, as it had sought all along, the barely two-decades old Soviet Union, still struggling to survive and 'build socialism', no matter how one qualified this pioneering effort, then or now. In India, the struggle for freedom was poised to enter its most critical phase and, despite a certain well-justified distrust of its leadership, there was a hopeful turbulence in the atmosphere around us. For me, personally, Bhagat Singh's had been a compelling presence since childhood, and now there was the immediate inspiration to the still-fresh saga of the struggle in Spain – the International Brigades, the finest of writers, poets and artists, across the continents, taking sides and committing themselves to political action against War and Fascism, their manifestos speaking the language of 'the revolutionary cause', 'proletarian revolution' and 'the destruction of capitalism', 'the establishment of a workers' government', and so on.

And most important of all that fired our radical imagination in that age, that which held together and gave its essential meaning to our idealism, was the continuing reality of Lenin's revolution in Russia – John Reed's *Ten Days That Shook The World* – and its cause now embodied in the Soviet Union; yes, the fabled and forbidden 'land of the Soviets', so distant and yet always so near, the centre of a worldwide fraternity of revolutionaries and the bearer of the promise of *other* possibilities for the oppressed and exploited everywhere, indeed, at last, of a full and truly rich life for the entire humankind.

One almost inevitably moved Left, to revolutionary socialism which was then gathering unto itself, in Punjab and elsewhere in the country, virtually all the streams of modern India's revolutionary tradition – the legendary survivors of Kartar Singh Sarabha's Ghadarite uprising, old revolutionaries in exile or jails of India and the Andamans, comrades of Bhagat Singh and the battle-scarred fighters from different strands of 'revolutionary terrorism', leaders and activists of the militant peasant and working class movements, Left-wing socialist and Congressmen, radical young students and intellectuals, and many more. This is how I recorded it in an autobiographical note some years ago:

> And in due course, on the eve of the Second World War, I again came to Lahore, this time for may studies at a college there. My father, a remarkable man in his own mixed sort of way – a brilliant physician and surgeon, profoundly religious and puritanical, with a rather deadly combination of Gandhi and Lenin in his head – sensing the turbulence inside me, his only son, had advised: 'Do anything out there, but don't join some illegal organisation.' Predictably, this was the first thing I did on reaching Lahore. Even as I was searching for it, the Communist Party found me. When my father admonished me that I had shown scant regard for the family, I wrote back: 'I have found my real family.' The Communist Party meant this and very much more in those days, to so many of us at least. Besides, there was a certain pride in being a Communist. I still remember from those early years two lines from the poet C. Day Lewis. A question and an answer, they went something like this:
>
> *Why do we on seeing a Red feel small?*
> *For he is future walking to meet us.*
>
> Fifty years later, badly buffeted, some of this pride yet remains. Incidentally, this is also how I came to Marxism – beginning with whatever Marxism was then available with the Comintern and permitted or possible, under the British rule, in this country.

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IN fact, we had very little of Marx and Engels, or for that matter Lenin, available to us in those days, and a government ban on libraries at Lahore in this regard took care of much of even this little. 'Party literature' apart, Palme Dutt's *India Today* and Stalinist 'summing up' of Leninism in the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolshevik) – Short Course*, in illegally printed or cyclostyled editions, were the staple of our education in Marxism. Sympathetic writing on the Soviet Union was not easy to reach either; though later, with Hitler's invasion and the heroic Soviet resistance to Fascism as the War progressed, a great deal more of the Soviet Union became available. There was the monumental work of the Webbs, *Soviet Communism: A New Civilization* – 'In all social history, there has been no such a colossal and so exciting an experiment,' they had written. And we noticed that within two years they had withdrawn the interrogation mark they had put against the title in the first edition, published in 1935. The Fabian bias of the Webbs notwithstanding – a certain identification of socialism with statification – their exceptionally well-argued and documented writing was at once a recognition of and attribute to the truly astonishing achievement of the Soviet people and Communists in building what they had built – built, I may add, with Stalin and despite Stalin. This achievement retains its rich significance for all socialist experiments of the future.

Webbs apart, there was the Dean of Canterbury's *The Socialist Sixth of the World*, Joshua Kunitz's *Dawn over Samarkand*, reports by Nehru and Tagore, and so much else on the Soviet Union that we most avidly imbibed. So many with impeccable credentials had visited there and assured us with Lincoln Steffens: 'I have seen the future, and it works.' And I can still recall the argument which Eugene Vargas *Two Systems* had, in its own way, endorsed; namely, that given the massive release of people's creativity which socialism ensures as against its pitiful expression under capitalism (or for that matter under all class-divided societies of the past), it is only a question of time before socialism established its superiority and ultimately triumphed over capitalism.

A little later we had that 'strange and frightening story' as *Newsweek* called it, *The Great Conspiracy Against Russia* by Sayers and Kahn – a book which should be compulsory reading for every socialist even today. We learnt, yet again, how the bourgeoisie conspired and how it lied when it came to the Soviet Union and Socialism! Voracious readers, we devoured all this and despite all ~~the odds,~~ the illegal or semi-legal conditions of life and work, grew ever more firm in our solidarity with the Soviet Union as the first effective breach in the global capitalist system and in our revolutionary commitment to the cause of freedom and socialism in India. At the time, nothing, literally nothing appeared impossible to us. As the distinguished historian, V.G. Kiernan, my teacher and comrade of those years, recently wrote to me:

> Yes, those were exciting days we lived through when the dear old Party seemed to be soaring toward heaven.

We indeed lived and functioned in 'the actuality of revolution' as Lukacs once phrased it.

Today it all seems to be so very long ago. Not that the ideal has not held – the ideal of socialism as the historically necessary negation of capitalism, a free, cooperative and democratic society based on a social, that is, *genuinely social*, ownership of the means of production. It has. Through more than five decades, at Lahore or in Delhi, inside the Party or outside, in one form or another, a certain involvement with the socialist cause has always been there: the early activity in the student's movement, years of full-time revolutionary work with a stint in jail; writing, editing and translating for the Party (which, incidentally, included the Punjabi translation of the *Communist Manifesto*), or later, after the partition, as a teacher, occasionally as a Party member but always as an ordinary activist, often with an understandable love-hate relationship with the diverse currents or formations of the Communist Left, and so on. Through it all I have held on to the ideal of socialism and to whatever little Marxism I came to acquire, finding it useful, beyond politics, not only in my work as a teacher but in living my life as well.*

But if the ideal has held, it is also true that today the vision is somewhat blurred, due not so much to the passage of time as to the developments of these past few years which in their totality indeed constitute an unprecedented 'crisis of socialism' that demands an explanation, an honest coming to terms with it.

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BEFORE I attempt such an exercise, it is necessary to make a point which is often obscured in the current despair or euphoria over what has happened. I would like to affirm that the 'crisis of socialism' we are witnessing, though diversely damaging in its consequences, takes nothing away from the historic significance of the world's first socialist revolution or from the achievements of either the pioneering experiment in the erstwhile Soviet Union or the world communist movement – the achievements of 'historical communism' as it is being described in certain epitaph-like pronouncements these days.

The October Revolution, by its revolutionary breaching of the world imperialist system, not only heralded the *necessary* beginning of the new epoch of transition from capitalism to communism – a fact fully vindicated by the historical experience since then – it also achieved the immediate demolition of 'the prison house' that was Czarist Russia, ending age-old oppressions and freeing vast masses of human beings, peoples and nationalities, within its extensive frontiers. Local variations apart, even when led or supported by the Red Army, the changes in Eastern Europe at the end of the Second World War had similar liberating consequences for the common people in these countries.

This historical truth should not be too difficult to recognise or accept. But the pervasiveness of the crisis, the disillusionment and despair accompanying the collapse of the communist regimes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, makes it equally necessary to point out that these first revolutionary societies have had real achievements to their credit in the period following the initial revolutionary transformations, particularly noteworthy if account is taken of the conditions they had to a greater or lesser degree inherited and the circumstances in which they survived and achieved – economic, social, cultural and political backwardness, massive illiteracy, war, civil war and counter-revolution, continuous imperialist intervention in one form or another and, in most cases, a long tradition of centralised authoritarian rule often imposed from outside, etc. etc. The record is far, very far, from being only negative as the hostile critics are busy making out today.

In the Soviet Union, for example, it is not merely that its prodigies of industrialisation in the thirties constitute an incontrovertible argument for the capacity of a planned economy to achieve growth – in a single decade it turned the country into the world's second industrial power and created the powerful Soviet state that survived years of capitalist hostility and encirclement and could take on the full might of world Fascism and defeat it; an argument well confirmed by the spectacular performance of the Soviets during the years of reconstruction immediately following the Second World War when with its lands ravaged and the entire economy wrecked, and more than twenty million dead, the country was rebuilt into the world's other superpower.

Still more significant have been the other successes of this first experiment in building socialism: the establishment of the right to work and social security for the working people; the equitable distribution of scarcity and the reallocation of resources so as to reduce the economic disparities among different, unevenly developed regions; the rapid elimination of the conditions of extreme poverty and the development of social consumption of health, education and cultural life; the breaching of some at least of the traditional forms of sexism and securing unprecedented participation of women in social occupations and political life; the remarkable initial responses to such difficult and complex issues as national oppression or the protection of nature; and, especially in the early years, the extraordinary flowering of human creativity in every sphere and mass participation of workers and peasants in public life, etc. etc.

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* Cf. 'In Lieu of a Bio-data' in *Of Marxism and Indian Politics* and Preface to *Reason, Revolution and Political Theory* (third enlarged edition) both published by Ajanta Publishers, Delhi.

Even though there were retreats later on, tragic distortions and reversals in many areas, including the catastrophically rapid decay of Soviet democracy, the Soviet Union assured for vast masses of its ordinary citizens a life of material security and moral and aesthetic culture far superior to what even the countries of advanced capitalism have to offer to their common people. In Eastern Europe too, under the communist regimes, there were parallel achievements in economic, social and cultural spheres. These achievements even today have a great deal of explosive potential for the revolutionary processes of the future in these countries.

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THE impact of the Soviet Union and the movements associated with or inspired by it has been no less powerful and profound outside of its borders. And this does not refer only to their *decisive* contribution to the defeat of Fascism. It is no doubt true that while the communist movement attracted to itself some of the finest minds in the first world — writers, poets, artists, scientists and others — it was generally less influential than 'social democracy' as the latter had come to be. Despite its powerful presence in Italy and France, communism could not shift politics effectively in a socialist direction anywhere in Western Europe, though its heroic role in the resistance movements of occupied Europe gained for it extraordinary prestige and popularity which was eventually frittered away, partly because of the Soviet connection.

But there is no denying world communism's immense *civilising influence* on capitalism in the first world, in curbing its structurally inherent predatory logic at home and abroad. They very existence and survival of the Soviet Union over these years, together with the communist, socialist or labour movements it inspired or supported, was a most important factor, of course among many others, in persuading the ruling classes in the West not only to cede ground to anti-colonial liberation movements, especially after the Second World War, but also to make concessions to their own people, to establish and enlarge the elementary democratic rights in capitalist societies. It has been pointed out that social welfare provisions were often at their most generous in the West European states bordering the former Soviet bloc; those instituted at a time when the prestige of the Soviet Union was at its highest in the early post-War period, are even spoken of as 'the fruits of 1945'.

Far more significant in the short as well as the long run, perhaps, is the continuing impact of the October Revolution on a world scale, which the erstwhile Soviet Union, in its own much distorted manner, reinforced. Though the immediately following European revolution was betrayed, suppressed or aborted in different countries, the Russian revolution survived to be a source of constant inspiration for the anti-capitalist revolutionary movements everywhere. What is more, it ignited the worldwide anti-colonial liberation struggles in the periphery and semi-periphery of the global capitalist system. This may well turn out to be its crowning achievement in history. The salvoes from the battleship *Avrora*, heralding a 'Workers and Peasants' Government' in Russia, sent out the message of Marxism to the oppressed and exploited in the remotest corners of the earth, and with it came the Leninist summons to militant revolutionary politics, which have since moved vast masses of people to become effective actors in political life, to make their own more or less successful revolutions in China, Cuba, Vietnam and elsewhere.

The Soviet Union, just as it aided the radical causes and the communist movements abroad, also provided help to these liberation struggles and a certain support and protection when they emerged as revolutionary regimes. That, increasingly, this aid or help, support and protection, was born not of any consideration for the world revolutionary process but of mixed compulsions of own history and ideological legitimacy, 'national interest' and even *realpolitik*, or plain superpower politics, should not be allowed to obscure the signal Soviet contribution to the anti-colonial liberation in the Third World. Certainly, the sweep of post-War decolonisation owed much to the challenge and competition resulting from the need for the Western colonial powers to contend with a powerful and prestigious global rival.

Indeed, without the 'historical communism' as it has been called, this world of ours would have been a far more inhuman and hopeless place. Beyond its historically specific achievements mentioned above, to which could be added many more, is a somewhat intangible aspect of the social reality around us today, a general illumination, as it were, that bathes all the failed or successful particularities of our age. You have to take only one quick look around to recognise the living presence of 'historical communism' in the enhanced awareness of humankind the world over concerning issues of human dignity, of justice and injustice, of equality, oppression and exploitation, in the voice and hope the poor and the oppressed have come to acquire in our times, in the quality and spread of their struggles for a better life and, above all, in their confidence, despite all the retreats and reverses, that they can fight and win their emancipation...

I am aware of the complexities of the historical processes subsumed in the sketchy account above, aware of the need to make qualifications as also to take notice of the terrible, often needless, price paid for some of the achievements. But the point I am immediately wanting to make is the simple one: there is a great deal to be said, even today, even in this hour of 'defeat', for Lenin's Revolution, for the Soviet Union that was, and for the world communist movement — they have another record which holds promise of other possibilities that may yet be.

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BUT the point made, the fact of 'defeat' retains its overwhelming reality. It may be too early or rash to speak of the termination of the historical process that began in 1917, but *the* issue today is the 'crisis of socialism', dramatically highlighted by the collapse in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and the stampede backward into the world capitalist system. And this evokes memories of another kind, they come rushing in a welter, filtered through time.

Even as a I left home and took the road to life and politics with Marxism, among the very first books I read was one recently published by a Professor of Economics at Lahore, Brij Narain, titled *Marxism is Dead*. Later I was to learn that periodic pronouncements of this sort are the historic destiny of the doctrine of Karl Marx. One that claimed more than the usual attention and was constantly thrown at us was that symposium by six penitents with communist pasts, *The God That Failed*, as if god, any god, ever does anything else but fail, at least most of the time.

However, I must confess that never before did such a pronouncement sound so convincing as it does today. And the memories, in their rush, travel over the other territory—the territory of doubt and disillusionment over these fifty long years: the dubious aspects of Stalin's pact with Hitler; the sudden switch to 'Peoples' War'—'who lives if Russia dies'—whose ambiguities overnight reduced us from heroes in the freedom struggle to its 'traitors'; the dissolution of the Communist International and the post-War surrender of revolution in Greece and the revolutionary possibilities in Italy and France; the breaking away of Tito's Yugoslavia; the trials, purges and executions in Eastern Europe, reminiscent of the Moscow trials, the purges and executions of the thirties, in which perished, as we now fully know, more than a million Communists, including almost the entire leadership of the Red Army and 1108 of the 1966 delegates present, together with 98 of the 139 Central Committee members elected, at the Seventeenth Congress of CPSU(B)—'the entire flower of the revolution had been butchered', as E.P. Thompson put it later, decimating whatever was left of the 'Party of Lenin'. Incidentally, this Congress held in 1934 and known as the 'Congress of Victors' was hailed by Stalin himself for its 'colossal achievements', for 'the decisive results achieved by socialism in all branches of economic and cultural life', for laying 'an unshakeable foundation of a socialist economic system in our country', etc. etc.

We believed Stalin entirely but we were also learning, without entirely believing though, something of the ruthlessness and terror behind some of these achievements; if ideals had indeed moved millions of Russian people and Communists to heroic endeavor, their actual practice had also caused these people and Communists untold pain and suffering. Socialism was acquiring, above all, in its lack of democratic freedoms, its arbitrary and cruel exercise of political power, an ugly and inhuman face. This was certainly a contributory factor in the working people turning away from this socialism in the countries of advanced capitalism, though it retained its attraction for the backward, poverty-stricken countries of the Third World where an increasing number of people saw in it the promise of rapid economic development and a better life.

For us, however, it was socialism as we believed it to be, and socialism by definition has a human face. Its ugliness in Soviet Russia, whatever part of it we were then willing to see, was credibly attributed to its historical origins—hadn't Marx argued against utopianism and written of the 'inevitable defects' in the new society as it emerged from the old capitalist one? In any case our official Marxism was content to explain it all, really explain it away most of the time, as so many 'mistakes' or 'distortions', as unfortunate 'deviations' from 'socialist norms'... Such 'explanation' was not difficult to accept because we *knew*, and we were daily reminded of it by irrefutable, ever-accumulating, new evidence, how the bourgeoisie lied and conspired against the Soviet Union. The lies and conspiracies of the bourgeoisie indeed stood between us and the truth. For the rest, our idealism, our faith and commitment, made up for our ignorance, our lack of information and understanding.

Then, confirming our worst fears, came Khrushchev's Report at the Twentieth Party Congress, to be followed in regular succession, after the early rumblings in East Germany, by Hungary (1956), Czechoslovakia (1968), and Poland (1980), interspersed with the American-backed brutal massacre of over one million men, women and children in Indonesia, liquidating the largest Communist Party in the non-socialist world and the near-total silence of the entire communist world over it, the violent breach between the Soviet Union and China and further splits within 'the socialist world' and the communist movement, the armed conflicts between countries professing socialism amidst widespread charges that they are taking 'the capitalist road' and so on, accompanied all the while by authentic news about the stagnation of the Soviet economy and society and the continuing degeneration of the Communist Party and its leadership, the rulers of the Soviet Union—the public bestowal of Soviet honours on Suharto, the butcher of Indonesia, being as good a symbol as any of this degeneration... Such are the memories of doubt and disillusionment over the years.

And now, finally, no longer the memories but the harsh contemporary reality, the earthquake of 1989-90 and its tremors at Tiananmen Square, the ignominious collapse in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union! 'Defeat of socialism', 'triumph of capitalism', the enemies exult and proclaim. And, once again, 'Marxism is dead.'

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'UPTURNED UTOPIA' is how Norberto Bobbio has described the recent developments in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and to convey the full tragic meaning of the metaphor, he points out that it was 'the first utopia that tried to enter into history', for it was sought to be raised on a real, material basis. Utopias have been with us for a very long time. Religion, for example, has invariably promised a heaven, up there, to its votaries, especially those who have little or nothing down below on this earth—only its details have varied with the varying historical or even geographical contexts of different religions. And there have been the secular versions too, like *Island of the Sun* in antiquity, or Thomas More's and Utopian Socialists' in more modern times. But all such utopias, religious or secular, were imaginary, like Plato's in *Republic* which was, as Glaucon put it to Socrates, true only 'in our words'. These utopias indeed played a socially important ideological role in human affairs, but they did so primarily by virtue of their real significance which lay not so much in the imagined ideal they projected as in the implicit critique they carried of the inadequacies of contemporary society.

But the utopia now 'upturned' was different – it had dared to move from the realm of 'words' to that of 'things', and seemed to have succeeded, almost, in giving a real expression to the ideal. And even if, for the moment, we must speak in the past tense, it is well to remember what an ideal it was! Even as it claimed the allegiance of any number of master spirits of our time – a Neruda or a Picasso, a Joliot-Curie or an Einstein, an Aragon or a Hikmet, a Brecht or a Faiz, to mention only a few from more recent years – it had also the power to move, more than any other ideal in history, millions below, Fanon's 'wretched of the earth', to heroic action on behalf of freedom and dignity of woman and man. It had behind it, as Gandhiji once said, 'the purest sacrifice of countless men and women' – they had risked their all for its sake, accepting all the hazards of life – long revolutionary struggles, cheerfully facing prison and exile, torture and death in the extermination camps. It was the inspiration of Bhagat Singh when he chose to 'mount the gallows boldly and with a smile', and of Che Guevara when death surprised him in the jungles of Bolivia. Gabriel Peri, on the eve of his execution by the fascists had spoken of it as the 'singing tomorrows' of mankind.

'Upturned Utopia' is an understandable description of what has happened, but as a metaphor it has its limitations too. Taken literally, it can be quite misleading. Not only because it is certainly too early to speak of these matters in the past tense, but far more because it simply *was* no utopia. As 'actually existing socialism', its problems, contradictions and dilemmas, its very nature, were for long a subject of angry or anxious, friendly or hostile discussion among socialists and Marxists of the world. Trotsky onward, and including Mao Zedong's critique and Bettelheim's classic *Class Struggles in the USSR*, there is a whole corpus of authentic *socialist* criticism of what was being built in these post-revolutionary societies. While most hoped, rather wishfully it is obvious now, for a turn from 'actual' to 'real' socialism, and none even remotely anticipated the present ignoble denouement, the analytical comment was uncompromisingly sharp and the forebodings clearly expressed. Only a decade back, for example, Paul Sweezy wrote of the very real possibility that the Soviet society may have reached 'a dead end...with no visible signs of a way out'. And as long ago as 1949, in an explicit statement of his commitment to socialism – 'Why Socialism?' – Einstein had, in his own straightforward manner, thus focussed on one of the most crucial issues:

> Nonetheless, it is necessary to remember that a planned economy is not yet socialism. A planned economy as such may be accompanied by the complete enslavement of the individual. The achievement of socialism requires the solution of some extremely difficult socio-political problems: how is it possible, in view of the far-reaching centralisation of political and economic power, to prevent bureaucracy from becoming all powerful and overweaning? How can the rights of the individual be protected and therewith a democratic counterweight to the power of bureaucracy be assured?

Later, equally specifically, as an economist Lange wrote, in italics: *'The real danger of socialism is that of a bureaucratisation of economic life.'* And we had the characteristically pungent and perceptive observation of Kalecki: 'Here in Poland we have successfully abolished capitalism; all we have to do now is to abolish feudalism.' He had thus drawn our attention to the formation of neo-feudal structures of power in these post-revolutionary societies, which involved not only the denial of political equality, the socialist sharing of power and freedoms, but also a politically coercive appropriation of surplus from the direct producers, very much akin to the feudal mode of production.

There was plenty of such criticism, and obviously, for these *socialist* critics there was no utopia in the Soviet Union or elsewhere. It is true, however, that these critics, though socialists or Marxists, were strictly speaking 'outsiders' for official Marxism and the mainstream Communist Parties, and they were treated as such. It is the 'insiders', those who belonged, who really mattered, and for them it was indeed an utopia realised – they saw or heard or spoke no evil!

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BUT now it has become impossible not to see or hear or speak. And much as I would have liked to avoid it, a nagging question persists, especially for the period after the Khrushchev Report of 1956. What of the hordes of these 'insiders', scholars, academics and writers of all sorts, members of friendship societies or peace, solidarity and sundry other international organisations, leaders and functionaries of the Communist Parties, and so many others, who visited there year after year, often several times in a year, and yet saw and heard nothing – nothing not merely of the terrible costs of forced collectivisation, the deaths of millions of ordinary Soviet citizens and Communists as 'internal enemies', the purges, executions and gulags of the past or of the growing chauvinism, national and ethnic antagonisms, gender or minority oppression, drunkenness and religiosity, even racism and anti-Semitism, but more specifically and to the point, nothing of the almost mafia-like degeneration of the Communist Party and its leadership and the self-serving abuse of monopoly of power by the new rulers to secure a most corrupt and vulgarly luxurious living for themselves – no different from and in many ways worse and more obscene than what Engels spoke of as 'the senseless luxury and extravagance of the present ruling class and its political representatives' in capitalist society.

They saw and heard nothing of the yawning chasm that had come to exist between the rulers and the ruled, the near-total alienation of the people from the powers that be, or their indifference, hostility or contempt for the new rulers, the communist leadership, which, denied other avenues, found an eloquent expression in the politically explosive humour of popular jokes. Remember the one about Khrushchev's vulgar flaunting of his material acquisitions before his old mother who, impressed, yet has other memories, remains worried, and fearfully asks: 'But son, what if the Bolsheviks come back?' Or the one where a tired and disgusted citizen leaves his never-ending queue in anger to go and kill Brezhnev, only to return, soon, disappointed, for 'the queue there is much longer', etc. etc.

Scholars, perhaps, one can understand—and I am not here speaking of the far-too-many hangers-on or racketeers in the academic business and the business of Left politics as well. Compulsions of official Marxism or 'party loyalty', together with their mundane interests apart, the dominant methodological orientations and the 'functional rationally' that has come to govern the organised academic disciplines and research, may well have prevented these scholars from seeing the reality behind the appearances; they simply chose to be 'scholars' first and Communists or Marxists only a long time afterwards. But what about others, above all the leaders and functionaries of the fraternal Communist Parties and allied organisations, whom Lenin once likened to *inspectors* visiting the Soviet Union for a check-up on what was being done? How come they failed to see what a poet, who was a Communist too, saw so early and so clearly, namely, the awesome alienation of the people from their rulers? This is what Bertolt Brecht wrote, way back in 1953, when the first rumblings of the coming earthquake were heard and a workers' uprising was suppressed in Berlin:

> After the uprising of the 17th June
> The Secretary of the Writers' Union
> Had leaflets distributed in the Stalinallee
> Stating that the people
> Had forfeited the confidence of the government
> And could win it back only
> By redoubled efforts. Would it not be easier
> In that case for the government
> To dissolve the people
> And elect another?

The Communist rulers in Berlin, however, did the next best thing—they went on to build the wall!

Whatever the motivations or the extenuating circumstances, this stubborn refusal to see or hear or speak, when it was their revolutionary duty to see, hear and speak, constitutes an act of historic complicity on the part of these leaders and functionaries that is crying out for atonement, which must *visibly* express itself, above all, in a return to communist norms of personal conduct and a better, revolutionary practice of Marxism. One can only hope that they have the necessary honesty and courage, for the sake of their comrades in the ranks and the cause they hold dear. One does not have to be a repentant Communist to thus come to terms with our past. ■

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Forests and Tribes: A Macro-Level Perspective

J.S. BHANDARI and SUBHADRA MITRA CHANNA

Problems related to forests centre around the major issues – that of commercial use of forest produce and that of ecological preservation. These can be viewed at two levels – the macro-level, involving a global distribution and use of resources and the micro-level involving the dynamics of interaction between forest dwellers and their immediate environment.

From primordial times forests have been exploited by humans for their subsistence and provided the natural environment for mankind for most part of their existence as Homo Sapiens. The first mode of subsistence, namely, foraging was largely forest-based for such populations as inhabited them. The process of deforestation is not a recent phenomenon either. It started right from the time human beings created a secondary environment by replacing naturally growing species by domesticated plants. With the growth of civilisation, more and more forest land was replaced by human habitations such as villages and cities and permanently cultivated lands. The first encounter of humans with the forest was one of conquest where man had to conquer the forest, in order to spread his civilisation. In the process, two types of human populations developed – those who regarded the forest as uninhabitable and whose relationship to forest was only marginal and the second type who lived within the forest in a more or less symbiotic relationship. Over a lengthy period, the village-urban man and the forest-dwelling man went their own way. It was more or less taken for granted that the forest belonged to the people who lived in them and little encroachment over their rights occurred.

With the advent of industrialisation and an increased use of the world's resources, which included products of the forest, the civilised man developed a new interest in the forest – a commercial interest. Industrialisation started in the West and pushed the White men to remote areas of the world in search of more and more resources to feed their growing industries. The colonisers developed a commercial interest in the Third World, forests. The colonial rulers established their own rights over the forest resources as against that of the tribal populations who were the traditional users of these. In doing so, they created certain myths as an ideological justification for their usurption. These myths portrayed the natives as predators, vandalising the forest resources. The economically motivated usurption was given an ideological cloak of preservation of forests.

After independence our democratic government had as one of its primary objectives the rapid industrialisation of the country. Quite correctly this policy was formulated to give India its rightful place in the global economy. The macro-level objective, however, had micro-level repercussions that were not always conducive to the well-being of the populations. The national government reiterated the myths created by the colonial rulers of overuse or depletion of the forest resources by the tribals. One long established and accepted myth was regarding the wastefulness of jhum cultivation. (Haimendorf, 1982; Pathy, 1989) To this effect the forest policy formulated in 1952 placed the claims of the government over the forests higher than that of its inhabitants in the name of national interest. The national interest of the Indian Government was the same as that of the colonial government – the commercial exploitation of forest resources, except that now the benefits went to the Indian nation and were not siphoned out by an outside power.

A third phase in the attitude towards forests and its resources started when the forest became important not economically but also ecologically. Interestingly enough, the ecological movement started in those very First World countries that were responsible for large scale global ecological degradation in the first place. Another factor in the equation was that increasingly the individuals at the micro-level, those who were the actual inhabitants of the forest, became aware of their immediate rights over the traditional resources. In the ecological dimension the problems related to forests was not of use but of conservation. Increasingly at the global level it was realised that the world's natural resources must be conserved for a long-term benefit to the human population. But here the problem becomes more complex than a simplified version of conservation. The First World countries, through their long history of colonisation and capitalist growth, had depleted the resources of the Third world countries while preserving their own natural resources. Today, in the name of preservation, the Third World countries will have to cut

The authors belong to the Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi.

down on their use of these very resources, control over which they have acquired only recently.

Moreover, to compete in the world economy as well as for their own internal development, countries like India cannot afford to completely keep off from the wealth of natural resources available in their own country in the name of ecological preservation. The history of colonial exploitation which has enriched the First World countries has today put at the top those countries who have exploited global resources the most such as the USA.

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THE ideas of ecological preservation have given rise to completely new ideas regarding the forests and its native dwellers. The people who were earlier regarded as predators on the forest resources are now regarded as the foremost conservators of these resources. The model that was put forward was one of age-old harmonious relationship between the forest and the forest-dwellers and since there was no large scale depredation of forests by the tribals in their pursuit of a livelihood, it was believed that if these resources were left in the hands of the tribals, they would be preserved for eternity. (Leacock and Lee, 1982)

Social anthropologists and social activitists in India have been strongly influenced by these views which when viewed from the micro-level are right in supposing that the tribals under traditional conditions maintained a relationship with the forests in which resource use was regenerative. Neither foraging nor shifting cultivation had any large scale irreversible degenerative effect on the environment. The popularly accepted view was that the tribals should be left to continue their traditional mode of life in the forests. Although it is true that commercialised use of forest resources has led to large scale deforestation in recent times, the solution could not, at least for us, lie in an isolation of both tribals and the forests. Viewing the power equation at macro-level, the globally inferior placement of a country like India must make us a little cautious in accepting in toto the views imposed by the First World countries.

As an example we can take the case of the Denes who live in north-west territories in Canada's western sub-Arctic. (Asch, 1982) The Denes' claim to a separate nationhood and their claims to their native lands, including a traditional mode of livelihood, have been strongly supported by public opinion and the local anthropologists who have taken up cudgels on behalf of these tribals. The tribals supported by anthropologists have won a case staying the Canadian Government's efforts to lay down a pipeline in this region which would have deprived them of their forest based livelihood and also caused widescale environmental imbalance. A clause in the agreement ultimately reached was for the protection of the environment and the species for the benefits of the Dene people.

There is a movement among anthropologists, especially in the First World countries, to popularise movements such as that of the Denes, to bring to light through individual fieldworks, the economic viability and hence rationality of survival of traditional methods of livelihood even in the modern world. The aim is to save the traditional modes of livelihood and way of life and by so doing preserve the environment from exploitation by capitalist penetration. Increasingly, many Indian anthropologists have also started thinking on these lines. But to transfer the problem of forest resources and tribals to the Indian situation, we must first see the points of difference between us and them.

The facts that come to light if we look at the examples of the tribals in Canada and Australia where such homeland movements have taken root are:

1) In each of these cases the political rights of the tribals, who are ethnically the native populations, were granted to them by the active participation, willingness and awareness, on part of those in power (who were also the original usurpers of their land). And tremendous public sympathy for the cause of the tribals who were also viewed as the rightful owners of their native lands.

2) Each of the countries mentioned are in a highly developed stage and abound in resources and have an overall prosperous economy without any population pressure.

3) The tribals in each of the case had certain financial resources of their own which they could spend on their own welfare—in those cases to seek legal aid for themselves though after the initial stages, the matter became a public and national affair.

The Cree Indians had a flourishing trade in furs, the Australian aborigines were being given government cash aid in the form of old age pensions, welfare aid, etc. and the Dena of Mekenzia River Valley also had a trade in fur and other bush resources. In every case the tribals had an input form the macro-system which enabled them to reproduce themselves as hunters and gatherers and at the same time maintaining beneficial trade relations with the capitalist market. The economic viability of the tribals is a direct reflection of the state of economy of the country which is highly developed. Secondly, the power equation between the tribals and their White rulers are different. The tribals, the native population, have every right to regard themselves as rightful owners of the land and the Whites as usurpers. Some reciprocal feeling of guilt would likewise exist among the White people to account for the public sympathy.

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QUEBEC is ranked as the world's highest producer of hydro-electricity per capita, even exporting a small portion to Ontario and New York. A greater proportion of the hydroelectricity is used to consume local needs of pulp, paper and metallurgical industries. This coupled with the well known fact that Canada is one of the most developed and also demographically one of the least strained countries points to an important fact that the Canadian Government can afford to provide the aboriginals the land resources with which to maintain and reproduce themselves.

Throughout the history of colonial conquests and expansion of capitalism there has been a struggle for resources between the power-holders and those who had traditional rights to those resources. If at the end of the twentieth century we see some of the power-holders relinquishing their hold on these coveted resources, it is probably because they have reached a level of development where the pressure to exploit more and more resources is eased. Moreover, the 'back to homeland' movement reinforces the ethnic divide between the Whites and the native tribals which suits both the sides.

In India if we perpetuate the same divide between the tribes and their forests, we shall be making a grave mistake. India is not divided into natives and outsiders. We are all native to the Indian soil and as such to separate the tribals from the mainstream in the name of preservation would be to create a divide where none should exist. Although traditionally the tribals live in the forests, the forests belong to all who are Indians. Likewise, the tribals are no different from the mainstream population. It is true that traditional methods like foraging and horticulture did not degrade the environment. But such economies had the characters of finite production objectives and maintenance of the population at the minimum level of the carrying capacity of the land. (Sahlins, 1972) It is because the population, which was limited to begin with, also had limited consumption and production objectives that the environment was least affected. Under conditions of modernity, higher rate of demographic growth and increased consumption goals of the people would make traditional methods of foraging and horticulture uneconomic options, even for the populations traditionally engaged in them.

The picture of environmental harmony in terms of maintenance of ecosystemic balance is also not quite correct. Over a millennium, the ecosystems of the globe have not been in a state of static equilibrium. The entire history of civilisation is a history of deforestation. Even under pristine conditions the ecosystemic continuity in terms of regeneration is quite often only partial. However, as Odum (1969) points out, the natural systems seek to reach stability in terms of equalisation of input and output and the human systems tend to maximise outputs and minimum inputs. In the traditional economies of the foragers and forest-dwelling peoples, the social goals being limited the regenerations were more effective. Human interventions of the capitalist type with unlimited production objectives have led to what Bennett has termed, "exponential curves of increasing output and exploitation". But this exploitation has occurred at the global or macro-level. At the micro-level—as has been indicated by many study of forest dwelling people or foragers—they are not in any state of absolute static equilibrium with the forest. As Bird (1988 :17) has pointed out, the isolation st picture of foragers giving a sense of timelessness is false. The South Indian hunter-gatherers such as Paliyans and Nayakans have been in contact with neighbours for a millennium. They engage in a number of activities other than foraging and their social organisation shows inbuilt resilience to adjust to non-foraging conditions and populations.

Thus to try to solve the problem of global ecological degradation by preserving the forests for the tribals and to let them pursue their way of life undisturbed is not the correct approach, at least for a country which is still in the developing stage. First of all, in a country like India we should think of integrating all people under one nationhood and not create a separate category like tribals for the forests. The tribal way of life has not been unchanging and may change further without the tribals in anyway losing their cultural identity. The preservation of forests should be seen in the global context of control of resources. India is a developing country with a tremendous population pressure. We can neither afford to lose our resources nor fritter them away; neither should we think of maintaining the forest-dwellers as they are, in the name of preservation.

The real hindrance lies in the improper utilisation of resources, not in their reallocation. The defect lies in the faulty implementation and ineffective institutional mechanisms for organising proper resource utilisation. The tribals have as much potentiality for change as anyone else. But they should be properly handled. Social forestry, for example, has come out to be a failure in most cases because of planting of wrong species of trees and misunderstanding of local social organisation. (J.J. Roy Burman) The local people can be consulted in the kind of forestation that is best suited to the needs of development. The tribals can themselves make commercial use of forests which by their long experience of forest life should be more judicious than that of the outsiders. The divide today is that the tribals are left with the major forest products (MFP) and the major commercial products are used by outside capitalists who do it with scant respect for ecological degradation. Even social scientists such as Fernandes (1989) talk only of the tribals' rights over MFP such as fuel, fodder and herbs and treat them only as forevers and likely to remain so. The involvement of the tribals even in the commercial use of major produce like timber and their tehnological input into planting of right species at the regional level might help our forest programmes considerably.

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SINCE global economic pressure prevents us from isolating our forest resources we should not isolate our tribal populations by retaining them as traditional economies. If forests must be used the local people should have greater rights in them both in terms of decision-making and commercial benefits. The considerable ecological wisdom stored in the traditional cultures can be effectively used for the management of these resources. This does not mean that we leave them only with their firewood and fodder but bring them up to take decisions regarding building of dams and industrial use of forest products. This is not to say that ecological degradation is not a real problem, but the costs of it should be borne largely by the First World countries who started it in the first place. To prevent ecological degradation, a most judicious use of forest resources is required, which can be achieved better if the distinction between civilised men and forest-dwellers is obliterated. The tribals should not be kept away from change but must be allowed to evolve their own version of change and development. Instead of trying to manage their resources and taking decisions on their behalf, let them manage their own forests, not in a traditional but in a modern way. Let them participate in the building of an Indian nation and not remain confined to their own world. They should be allowed to manage the forests not only for themselves, but for all of us. That the tribals are *good with the* forest should not imply that they are good *only for the* forest.

Global capitalism is a process that has already been set in motion and cannot be arrested. However, a country like India has to integrate its manpower and natural resources to compete in this race. We should not, in this process, get dictated by the First World ideologies but create a rational order suitable to our own situation both economically and politically in terms of both our external global relations and the internal relations within our country. Our objectives of production cannot be curtailed and our equally pressing needs for preservation must be looked at with a balanced view weighing the micro-level against the macro-global situation. ■

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TRIBUTE

Blend of Eminence and Humility

H. Y. SHARADA PRASAD

Mallikarjun Mansur is no more. The torment has gone back into the magic mountain where it used to flow.

He sang for more than sixty years. And he sang till almost the very last although he had been so continuously harassed by illness. I recall a private concert he gave in Delhi just five or six months ago when he was kind enough to tell the hosts to ask me to be present. On that occasion he apologised to the audience for not being able to sing for even two hours.

There was always a special intensity to his singing, a special urgency and earnestness in his treatment of melody. These are days when the voice can be preserved, unlike earlier centuries, on the beginning of the phonograph with three-and-seven minute records. Some may say that the immortals of music can now be truly immortalised. But a record of a Mansur concert can never be a substitute for the live one – for each time he sang with a new creative impulse, and in each rendering there were several surprises. His *Patdeep* or *Shivmat Bhairav* of today would be a different experience from his *Patdeep* and *Shivmat Bhairav* of yesterday.

So many of our well-known authors and artists move about with a swagger for they seem to believe that they indeed are colossi striding the scene. They are all the time looking at those who are looking at them. Mallikarjun did not possess a regal bearing. He did not clothe himself in princely robes. He did not care to be the centre of attraction. He was content to be inconspicuous. He continued to look like a shopkeeper's accountant. He did not speak like an oracle. He rarely referred to his triumphs. He won not only respect but the affection of his contemporaries. He was wholly without envy. His was an unfailing geniality and lightness of heart. His airs were what he sang. He did not put on any.

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THOSE who met him never failed to wonder at the combination of eminence and humility. His autobiography would throw some light on this riddle of Mallikarjun. *Nanna Rasayatre* (which could be rendered rather inadequately as "My Emotional Pilgrimage" – for there is no satisfactory English equivalent for *rasa*) is a little masterpiece. But few know about it because it is in his mother-tongue, Kannada.

Most autobiographies in our country are by political persons or literary men. Few are by artists. Mansur's book cannot be compared with Yehudi Menuhin's in its length or its depiction of a musician's challenges and rewards. Mansur tells us that his fingers are meant to play the *tanpura* and not ply the pen. He took up the book only under the pressure of a couple of literary friends – A.N. Krishna Rao of Karnataka and P.L. Deshpande of Maharashtra. He had kept no diary. His intention in writing the book ultimately was not to impress but to record his debt to his musical and spiritual preceptors.

Mallikarjun's reverence for his teachers comes out strongly especially for Nilkantha Buwa and for the sons of Alladiya Khan – Manji Khan and Burji Khan. For him they were perennial rivers from whom he could not draw enough. Even when he was nearing forty he kept going from his town Dharwal to Kolhapur for lessons from Burji Khan.

Writing nearly thirtyfive years after Burji Khan's death, he would say that his gurus continued to guide him in spirit, inspiring him, enabling him to understand the meaning of music, and bringing him whatever reputation he had gained.

Outwardly the most captivating aspect of Mallikarjun's music was its dramatic element. He went on the stage even as a young boy, following in the footsteps of his elder brother, and made a name for himself as Prahlada, Dhruva and Narada. But he also got out of the stage early, when he was still in his teens. The musician Nilkantha Buwa heard him and told his brother: "Give this lad to me. I shall make him a musician. His genius should not be wasted in theatre companies." The Buwa himself was with a religious establishment and apprenticeship to him was more than musical training.

Although he had made several discs for HMV even in his early twenties, music did not become a paying profession to Mallikarjun until much later in life. His mother's faith sustained him initially. After marriage, his wife somehow managed the house, convinced that she should aid his *tapas*.

One of the most moving chapters in the autobiography concerns Mallikarjun's mother. The family decided to go on a pilgrimage to the famous Saivite temple at Srisailam. Once there, Mallikarjun went to have a dip in the sacred pool, leaving his coat at the top of the steps. When he came up, the coat had disappeared and with it all the money of the party as well as the return tickets. He spent the whole day and evening moping. But his mother put heart into him. When it was nearly midnight, she took him to the temple and asked him to sing. The main door had been closed, but Mallikarjun obeyed his mother's command. He began to sing and soon the singer was lost in his song. To his surprise a priest opened the door and asked the group to go in. Mallikarjun's mother stood before the idol and made a prayer: "Lord, if you are true, take me unto yourself. I have no further interest in living. This is my only plea to you." Mallikarjun joked and told her: "How can He take you unless we let you go?"

They emerged from the temple and once again Mallikarjun was gripped by worry as to how to get back home. A fellow pilgrim noticed his plight and came forward to loan him the required money. The following day was spent in visits to more religious establishments. The group decided to spend the night at Srisailam and leave early in the morning for the railway station. As was the practice in those days at pilgrim centres, they spread their sheets on stones bordering the streets and went off to sleep. When it was near dawn, Mallikarjun woke up to the sounds of the bells of bullock-carts. All of a sudden a cart came hurtling towards them and ran over Mallijkarjun's foot. Before he could realise what had happened, it had also run over his mother. The Lord of Srisailam had answered the devotee's prayers and gathered her up to him.

It should not be imagined that Mallikarjun has painted himself as a blemishless saint. The book has a chapter which recounts the clash between him and his son. Mallikarjun had eight children, and Rajashekhar was the only son. Much to Mallikarjun's anguish he showed no interest in music, at least outwardly, and kept himself aloof. He even ran away from house when he was in the last year of school. Mallikarjun often told himself that he had seven *swaras* in his daughters and one false note in his son. The only consolation was that Rajashekhar was good at his studies in college. But a head-on collision came when he decided to marry a classmate, while Mallikarjun, the traditionalist, wanted him to marry a girl chosen by the family. Rajashekhar went ahead and Mallikarjun stood before the portrait of saints in the house and vowed never to let his son enter again.

Some years passed. One day Rajashekhar heard his father singing on the radio and something happened to him. Tears cascaded down his cheeks and he proclaimed that he would not touch food until he saw his father. The father, adamant, would not hear of it. In this dilemma, the family went to the prelate of Murgod and narrated the story. He sent for Mallikarjun. There was a long silence, which was broken when the holy man directed Mallikarjun to make up with his son. And he, the prelate, would take upon himself the responsibility for releasing Mallikarjun from his oath. He went on an expiatory fast.

Soon father and son drew close. Rajashekhar became one of Mallikarjun's star disciples, and accompanied him in his concerts, while holding his job as a teacher of English.

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THE best portions of the book, understandably, are where Mallikarjun speaks about his gurus and about the nature of music.

He was introduced to Manji Khan by Vishnupant Pagnis, who had gained a name for himself as Tukaram in Shantaram's film. Mallikarjun had by then sung *Gand Malhar* and *Adana* for HMV. Manji Khan was impressed by the records and tied the red thread of discipleship around Mallikarjun's wrist.

Practice began at eight every morning and went on until 1 PM. What struck the disciple most in the master was the manner in which *swaras* merged without a fissure. Manji Khan taught him how to visualise the whole configuration of a *raga* and how to move in different tempi within the time cycle, so that *raga*, *tala*, *laya* became one and inseparable. A single *raga* was taught over days, but each day, each time, is assumed a new birth, a new form. The same *raga*, the same composition, the same set of notes, but there was no repetition, no staleness, no feeling of it being a stereotyped reproduction. "Whether it was a straightforward *raga* like *Yaman*, or a twin *raga* like *Basanti Kedar*, or a complex *raga* like *Khat*, the stream of his (the guru's) singing flowed with astounding power and beauty. And once I began learning from him, my personality underwent a change. I felt there was nothing other than music for me. Here was nectar for a thirsty man."

But this discipleship lasted for only a year-and-a-half. It came to an abrupt end with Manji Khan's premature death. Mallikarjun went to his master's father, the venerable Alladiya Khan, and begged to be vouchsafed more insights into the Jaipur style. The elderly man said he was no longer in a position to devote five hours a day to a disciple and directed him to his second son, Burji Khan.

Mallikarjun found that Burji Khan was a true teacher, in that he understood the disciple's strength and shortcomings. Above all he learnt from Burji Khan how to eschew slackness and how to achieve creative independence within the framework of tradition.

Mallikarjun's book is a short one of a mere eighty-five pages, but, like his music, it conveys profundity in an unselfconscious way. It ought to be translated into all our languages (and into English, if anybody can find the vocabulary in English for our musical terms). Here is something that the Sangeet Natak Akademi and the Sahitya Akademi might take up. ■

(Courtesy: *The Hindustan Times*)

Global Convention of People of Indian Origin

K. P. BHANUMATHY

Paris was host to the second Global Convention of People of Indian Origin last month. It was organised by the Overseas Indians in France (OFI-NRI). The first convention was held in New York two years ago. Nearly five hundred delegates from as far as Surinam, India, the USA, Europe and South-East Asia attended the four-day meetings held at the Centre de Conferences Internationales at Avenue Kleber in Paris from July 10 to 14.

With 15 million people of Indian origin living in different countries of the world the very idea of bringing them together under one global umbrella may look a gargantuan job, especially when the Indian character of unity with diversity can mean different viewpoints that can keep them apart. The Indian Government which woke up to the tempting prospect of cultivating Indians who had left their country for greener pastures does not seem to have beguiled or emotionally awakened the NRIs abroad to the extent expected. Many reasons can be attributed to this failure and, according to the NRIs, this is the fault of the Indian Government which, they claim, have treated them as 'unwanted people'. "Even now the Indian Goverment treats us as milching cows, the Indian bureaucracy's attitude is daunting" says Augustin Benoit, the Chairman of the Overseas Indians in France.

Largely the NRIs are looking for opportunities to revive ties with the land of their forefathers in economic and cultural fields. The Paris Convention was organised with noble ideals towards solidarity and cultural pluralism with participation in India's industry, R&D, commerce, banking, financial investment and transfer of technology. On the whole one observed a willingness to cooperate with India but there were grievances and complaints galore from the assembly. "The Indian Government's apathy, the bureaucratic hurdles, the mind-boggling rules are a discouragement and the lack of communication puts us off, the NRI Consultative Committee has not met for two-and-a-half years, what use is it if a Minister from the Indian Government comes and talks to us of emotional ties, etc. and then goes away and forgets us," asks many leading NRIs.

Swraj Paul, the London-based industrialist, in his inaugural address told the convention delegates that the investment climate in India was much better today than what it was and would put the Indian economy back on rails. Facing a volley of questions Paul said that as the Indian Government had introduced fiscal reforms it was an encouraging factor for investments. The NRIs want further liberalisation of the economic policies and better conditions for implementation. Keith Vaz, a Member of the House of Commons in England and of Indian origin, said that Indians and other Asians face discriminations on the grounds of ethnicity. Even amongst Indians there were ethnic problems. The NRIs abroad are unanimous in asking for dual citizenship which, they say, will act as an investment incentive.

The theme of the convention – expanding horizons for people of Indian origin – was fully exploited by the delegates in its various aspects. They were particularly worried about the exports policy, currency convertibility and industrial policies. Financial institutions in India, said delegates from many countries, have a stranglehold on business houses and would like their interests, direct or portfolio, be governed by global standards of equity and probity. "We NRIs know the difference between borrowings and investment capital. If industrial development is used as a ploy for import substitution, the result is disappointing. Why has India a feeble role in the world market" asks Swraj Paul.

Streamline the administrative system, remove red tape and upgrade the infrastructure and treat us as business partners – was the refrain.

The NRIs, current deposits in India have reached Rs 6000 crores but it would treble if the government's policies would remove all suspicion regarding repatriable and non-repatriable deposits, says Augustin Benoit Convener of the Second Global Convention and Chairman of the GCPIO in France – a successful businessman of Indian origin from Pondicherry.

But true to the Indian character of infighting and bickering all was not smooth behind the scenes of the convention. Rival groups emanating from the USA tried to sabotage the convention. Bent on creating trouble, the American group of GCPIO suddenly withdrew its support and sponsorship to the convention in Paris. This was done when the steering committee demanded an account of the funds collected and details of expenditure from the Chairman of the first Global Convention in New York. "The raising of the question of inquiry of the huge funds collected by Thomas Abraham was justified under the Anti-Trust Law of the United States. This would clear the misunderstanding among people who wanted to join the second convention," said a member of the Steering Committee.

Almost 80 thousand dollars stand unaccounted. This was collected by the New York Convention. A deficit of 6000 dollars was shown by Thomas Abraham. Prime Minister Narasimha Rao who had agreed to be the Chief Patron for the Paris Convention withdrew when the infighting erupted.

"I was determined to hold the second Global Convention as planned irrespective of the hurdles in the interests of Indians living abroad. The Prime Minister's withdrawal of patronage was a great disappointment to the Indian community," said Augustin Benoit. The third GCPIO, it was decided, will be held in Canada in 1995. The resolution to hold the GCPIO in India was opposed by the USA and strongly supported by the delegation from Malaysia. ■

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BOOK REVIEW

Communist Role in Freedom Struggle

JAIDEEP NAIR

The collapse of the Soviet Union and numerous other socialist regimes in Eastern Europe brought with it a flood of academic and non-academic iterature on the past, present and future of the Communist Parties all over the world. Notwithstanding the occasional critical study on the 'socialist construction' n the Soviet Union or elsewhere, the deluge began with *glasnost* and *perestroika* being set in motion to stem the rot which had crept in due to deviations in praxis. These had resulted in the Communist Party becoming a monolithic embodiment of absolute power and privileges, supplemented by an inertia-ridden "new ruling class" composed of party member and bureaucracy.

The move towards opening up and further democratisation, both within and outside the Party, is he logical conclusion to decades of Communist Party-led, centralised political, economic and social praxis in hese societies. The resurgence of the Communists in these societies is directy dependent on the extent to which hey can engage in genuine self-criticism of their past performance and comprehend the emerging new realities. Of course, a dynamic aspect of he communist movement historically has been the occasional voice from within the movement (Trotsky, Luxemburg, Damodaran, P.C.Joshi) which did articuate apprehensions at various junctures of the direction he movement was taking, but these voices were muffled by the majority voice.

Struggle for Hegemony in India, 1920-47 (Vol. 1, 1920-34) by Shashi Joshi; Sage, New Delhi, 1992; Rs 325.

The Communist Party in India, unlike in the erstwhile Soviet Union, has not had the opportunity of being in power, except the State level. The Communists have been unable to identify their own roots here, both due to their dilemma-prone relationship with the naional movement, and initial near-total identification with the Bolsheviks. As K. Damodaran pointed out, the Comintern did not grasp the specific nature of the ndian social formation, wrongly assessed the strength of bourgeois nationalism of the Congress and under-esimated the relative autonomy of the Indian bourgeoisie and its political instrument, the Indian National Congress. The Indian Communists inherited this lack of understanding at that juncture and they became completely isolated from the mainstream of the nationalist movement in the late-twenties and the early thirties.

As a result, the Communist Party in India failed to use whatever opportunities it got to play its part in proportion with its effective power of intervention as the transformative part of a Left tendency in the Congress movement, which led the struggle for hegemony in India during the freedom struggle. It is in this context, Shashi Joshi, in her book, *Struggle for Hegemony in India*, Vol. 1, 1920-34 (which was originally conceived as a history of the Communist Party of India), effectively presents a critique of the role, tactics, strategy and understanding of the Communist Party during the nationalist movement that led to its alienation from the mainstream and subsequent marginalisation of its part in the struggle. The author's work differs from the existing historiography and sees the construction of the 'national experience' in terms of a 'triangular contest' (p. 8). For this purpose, she "chose the Left, specifically the Communists, as the protagonists of this story and then constructed the experience of their interaction with the others (state policies and national movement) as well as with social and political reality". (p. 7)

The concept of 'hegemony' which owes much to Gramsci, has been effectively used by the author, alongwith his theories on mass movements, ideological struggles, domination-subordination, etc. This had led to the "construction of a new paradigm" (p. 7) to study the British rule in India and the rise of the national movement. Some of the features which merit mention in this interesting study are:

1) The Communists in India viewed 'nationalism' as a bourgeois ideology and they identified the Indian bourgeoisie as the ruling class. The question which the author rightly raises is: on what basis could a Marxist identify the Indian bourgeoisie as the 'ruling class' under conditions in which the whole Indian people were dominated by an alien imperialistic bourgeoisie? After all, at that juncture, both the bourgeoisie and proletariat were subordinate classes, in the anti-colonial movement. In the course of this unified struggle, various ideologies would attempt to establish a hegemonic influence over the national movement (p. 26). To be able to establish this hegemony, the contending parties needed to comprehend the reality and feel the pulse of the masses.

2) That the Communists failed to perceive the ground reality and their own role in the ongoing struggle is evident from their understanding of Gandhi's strategy. Gandhi was able to link the constitutional method and non-constitutional method – that is, mass movements – to create a new strategy for the national

movement. The colonial policy was to acquire the consent of as many sections of the Indian people and draw them into the constitutional path of activity. In attempting to hegemonise the national movement, the state sought to possess 'moral prestige' and retain 'legal authority' by providing channels and institutions for the constitutional tendency to express itself and carefully handling the mass movements(pp. 14,17). Gandhi's strategy to counter-hegemonise the national movement was by a 'war of position', that is, periods of mass movement and intervals of truce. In this way the Congress acquired a hegemonic influence over a widespread anti-imperialist consciousness. The Communists, showing a lack of understanding of the socio-political reality in India then, and lost in their 'sectarian' ideological debates, propagated a 'war of manouevre' position, that is, a seizure of power model which was most unsuitable at that juncture. The Communists saw the role of Gandhi, Nehru and the Congress Socialist Party as part of a 'bourgeois manoeuvre'.

3) The author finds Nehru as the only leader to initiate a process of 'transformation' in the national movement towards the Left, by presenting a paradigm which transcended the positions of nationalists and Communists (p. 32). His aim was to gradually permeate the existing Congress movement with a Left and socialist ideology.

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THOUGH the theories of Gramsci are effectively used in this study, the author, by the end of her study, is able to effectively neutralise Gramsci's view that the striving for hegemony in the revolution required the formation of a mass Communist Party. In the Indian context, it is shown in the book, the continuous attempt to form a Communist Party became an obstacle in the struggle for hegemony by the Left and alienated the other Left formations.

The conclusion which the author arrives at is :

> Given the complex of political and social tendencies in the anti-imperialist movement, a paradigm of 'transformation' was the only real and effective form of strategic intervention that would have been practised by the Left. Presenting an 'alternative' to the 'transformation' of the Congress-led movement was not feasible. This transformation could best be achieved by a united Left and socialist tendency and not by separate Left groups competing with each other Above all, it could not be achieved by a Communist Party. (p. 41)

This extremely comprehensive and interesting book (first of three volumes) by Shashi Joshi is of immense relevance to understand the role the Communist Party played, or rather did not play in the nationalist movement. One can trace the 'marginal' state of communist politics in India today to the understanding it had of the freedom struggle and the consequent policies it adopted in the thirties and the forties. Sectarianism in its thinking has presisted even after independence, and the existence of a disunited communist movement at present is a sad reflection of that phenomenon.

Notwithstanding the relevance of the communist ideology as a radical alternative or a humanising influence on pristine capitalism, it is important for the communist movement in India to constructively introspect its past, especially its attitude to the nationalist struggle. It has to be able to reconcile to the fact "that certain ideologies are experienced as truly representing the national interests of the hegemonic position over the national movement and its mass following" (p. 27). And during the national movement, the Congress succeeded in acquiring that position.

It is equally important not to underplay the role of the Communists in the freedom struggle. If the Communist Party did at that juncture commit 'mistakes' due to an incomplete understanding of the socio-political reality in India, and depend on the Bolshevik view of India, it does not mean that they had no relevance in the struggle. The communist ideology was not an indigenous product and this led to a lack of understanding of its philosophy and principles amongst the Communists in India, and thus its direct application to the Indian situation without analysing its relevance. Subjective and objective factors were not taken into consideration at that time.

While reading this book, the mood which seems to unveil itself, amidst unmistakable strains of a nationalist discourse on the freedom struggle, is one which is likely to be found in the memoirs of an Indian Communist. One who after years of dedicated struggle looks back at the 'mistakes' committed and hopes that realisation of these will result in some amount of rethinking in the communist movement today (quite like K. Damodaran's interview to the *New Left Review*, September-October,1975). ■

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Morse Report on Troubled Waters of Narmada

HARSH DOBHAL

The much controversial Narmada project was once again in the limelight when the World Bank-appointed Morse Commission submitted its report on the rehabilitation and environmental aspects of the Sardar Sarovar project. "We think the Sardar Sarovar projects as they stand are flawed, that settlement and rehabilitation of all those displaced by the projects is not possible under prevailing circumstances, and that the environmental impacts have not been properly considered or adequately addressed," says Bradford Morse, head of the Independent Review Commission on the Sardar Sarovar Project, in a letter to the World Bank President, Lewis Preston.

This was, for the first time, that the World Bank had taken such an unexprected extreme step of appointing an independent Review Commission to look into a project funded by it, under tremendous pressure from the environmental lobby, public opinion in general and simmering discontent in the troubled valley of Narmada.

The 363 page report that has been hailed as a major victory for environmentalists in the country was released on June 18 in Washington. It says that both the World Bank and the Government of India share the responsibility for the situation that has developed. "Our findings indicate that Sardar Sarovar projects are beset by profound difficulties. These difficulties have their genesis in the earliest of the Bank's involvement in the projects, for they turn on the absence of an adequate database and failure to consult the people whose lives and environment were and continue to be affected."

Bradford Morse, a former US Congressman and head of the UNDP for ten years, has emphatically pointed out that the history of the environmental aspects of Sardar Sarovar is a history of non-compliance. There is no comprehensive impact statement. The project is based on "fragile" or "unfounded" assumptions which overstate the benefits and understate the costs. The World Bank and India both failed to carry out adequate assessments of the human impacts of the project. Failure to consult the people has resulted in opposition to the project. The report also points at the insufficient account taken of the principles enshrined in the Bank's 1982 operational manual statement outlining its policies regarding tribal people. The Bank's appraisal also failed to take into account the fact that environmental clearance in India was not forthcoming in 1983 from the Ministry of Environment and Forests because of insufficient information.

The report further emphasises that the World Bank "should proceed only if practical ways can be agreed to ensure that the pace of further construction of the dam is adjusted to whatever extent is required to permit a fully responsible approach to the resettlement and environmental concerns". It recommended that "the wisest course would be for the Bank to step back from the projects and consider them afresh".

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THE Narmada Bachao Andolan has hailed the report. Initially it opposed the members of the Review Commission from visiting the area, says an activist. But now, as the NBA leader, Medha Patkar, says: "The report is a slap on the face of those who have arrogantly refused to accept what the Andolan had been trying to say all these years." The report, she said, had rightly reflected the mood of the people in the valley. The report has come as a major victory for the residents of Manibelli village specifically, the first village to be submerged under the mega-project during this monsoon.

Following this on July 6 the Water Resource Minister called a meeting of the Chief Ministers of all the four affected States with Kamal Nath in view of its "dangerous implications" and in a desperate bid to damage the report. However, only polite conversations followed. Only Chimanbhai Patel and Sunderlal Patwa attended the meeting as the Chief Ministers of Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh respectively. Rajasthan and Maharastra preferred to send their Ministers instead.

The Morse Commission Report has raised certain serious questions and the time has come for a genuine introspection on our part. Why couldn't the Indian Government appoint its own independent review committee? What is the history of rehabilitation of the project-displaced people in India? One of treachery and deceit? In project after project, land was acquired for irrigation, industry and other purposes but the promises were quickly forgotten. Why is it that the

The author, an environmental activist, is a Research Scholar in the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University New Delhi.

poorest and the weakest who constitute these oustees are made to suffer in the name of so-called development? Who are the beneficiaries of these mega-projects and who bear the costs? Why can't our government come up with a comprehensive, human and uniform approach to rehabilitate the project-affected people so that the environment actually improves and the project-affected people emerge better off economically, socially and ecologically? Why should it suffer the kind of embarrassment it has at the hands of the Morse Commission Report when the activists at home have been speaking the same over the years? Having marginalised its own people why should the government compound its errors by accepting the World Bank's decision to set up a review committee instead of rejecting it outright? Why should a society accept the worldview of the World Bank as its own simply because it is funding the project (for how a society decides to use its natural resources i its own business, specially when we are a diverse cultur plurality)? It is this cultural pluralism, which only w know better than others in the world, that should defin and project sustainable development and not the multi national hegemony.

But as long as there is the absence of a stron political will, as long as our politicians and decisio makers are not sensitive to basic human issues, as lon as a small minority within our country keeps flaunting profligate life-style at the cost of the vast exploite majority, and as long as we keep selling our mind, bod and soul to the mutinationals and the WB, IMF, et these questions will remain where they are, staring at and giving a boost to social tensions, conflicts and agit tions that can assume disastrous overtones. ∎

EKRAM KHAWAR : Perverted Logic

(Continued from page 10)

phenomena. Remember the figure supposedly signifying the alleged exploits of Harshad Mehta and Co. The initial figure put at nearly Rs 2000 crores had to be quickly revised by the wizards of the trade and it suddenly jumped to Rs 4000 crores approximately. And still the sombre-faced knowledgeable ones continue to disagree with the figures. Room for CBI sleuths and all!

Are not newspapers known for providing interesting reading material? Almost true to type, one day they suddenly announce to the whole world that the American Consul takes the trouble of meeting C. Krishnamurthy, co- accused and son of V. Krishnamurthy, ex-Member of the Planning Commission, India. The reason is not far to seek because so and so even though Indian (may be just an NRI or RNI as you prefer) is an American citizen and thus and so on and so forth. And if it prods you to think about the true nature of the modern Indian state, curse yourself.

Democracy continues to flourish on Indian soil. Elected representatives of the people continue to occupy Parliament, deliberate and take decisions, adopt policies for the public good and carve out institutions to serve these goals, properly staff these institutions with suitable personnel. And if at the end of the whole exercise, things donot give an impression of having substantially improved who is to be blamed?

If despite all the good work of the Planning Commission for example entrusted with the job of planning for the bread and butter as well as the personal lives of the vast populace, we seem to lag behind in almost every respect by contemporary standards, the Planning Commission is hardly to be blamed. If actual spending on education, health, poverty alleviation has remained abysmally low the fault does not lie with the planners and their priorities, rather someone else, maybe th people, responsible for an ever increasing populatio have to shoulder the responsibility. If the whole planning process, as seen from below, seems to hav benefitted the rich and the RNIs and NRIs more tha the people, anything but the good intention of the planners is to be blamed.

Be what it may, despite all the compellin 'arguments' one canot miss the too obvious fact th planning for the millions happens to be the prerogati of persons, *prima facie*, having no stake in the projec And if that reminds you of the cynics around (includin the near cynical characterisation of those condemnabl books and their authors) who declare that our ruler given their priorities donot give a damn to whatever hap pens to the people of India it can hardly be helped.

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ARUN GHOSH : Economy

(Continued from page 6)

rom lending to industrial and commercial investors, hey are only following the "market". The *Economist* hould be asking as to what ails the system, not what for he banks are there. The USA is, after all, a free market economy; and the *Business Week* (of New York) – an equally conservative journal – recommended a few nonths back that the US Government should go in for nassive investments to shore up the tottering infrastrucure in the USA. Quite clearly, perceptions even among he exponents of the "free market system" vary, dependng on which side of the Atlantic Ocean they live. Anyhow, one must conclude that one expects banks to be prudent with the savings entrusted to their care by private savers.

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THERE is not point in entering into a polemical debate on whether the government uses savings as efficiently as private entrepreneurs do. Objective situations vary from country to country, and within the same country, rom time to time. None but the blindly dogmatic or wholly naive would have the same economic prescription for all countries for all time. The points of relevance of the above debate for India as of today are: (a) that there is, even as of now after a year of stabilisation policy, a large imbalance n the economy arising from the large deficit on the revenue account of the Central Government; (b) that while every effort should be made to reduce the revenue deficit, the magnitude of this deficit is such – 3.5 per cent of the GDP in 1990-91, as per the *Economic Survey* – that t cannot (and should not) be reduced precipitately; (c) hat as a result, one should aim to reduce, more precipitately, the "monetised" deficit, or in other words, he government borrowing from the Reserve Bank, which s directly inflationary; (d) that consequently, the focus of he policy-maker on the concept of "fiscal deficit" – which ncludes government borrowing from the public – is inappropriate in the context of the ongoing "stabilisation policy", and derives from the obsession of free marke apologists in regard to creating more space for the private sector when, as is well known, public investment in India has a "crowding-in" effect rather than a "crowding-out" effect on private investment; and finally (e) that there is need for both "regulation" of banking as well as the proper use of the savings of the households garnered by the banking sector, in the best interests of the economy as a whole, not for a small section of society.

The net result of the present policy framework is stagflation. We have negative growth of industrial producion and nearly zero rate of growth of the economy as a whole, even as inflation continues at double digit figures (at around 12-13 per cent per annum).

If we accept that the primary task of the policy-maker in India today is "stabilisation", if we concede hat the primary focus in this regard should be on reducing the revenue deficit (as well as the monetised deficit, to keep down inflation), if we also agree that credit curbs *per se* can only dampen production activity and should be resorted to only when the economy is overheated (which the Indian economy is clearly not) – look at the staggering extent of unemployment and absence of growth – we would then inevitably come to the conclusion that the remedy for India's present malaise does not lie with the fiddling of the SLR but with: (a) reduction of the government's revenue deficit (through higher and more effective income taxation and curbs on wasteful government current expenditure), and (b) expansion of infrastructure and other investments which would create more jobs not only directly but also through a stimulation of private enterprise and investment. If the above calls for government recourse to borrowing from the commercial banks, why fiddle with the SLR?

Until last year, the SLR was 37.5 per cent. It has already been brought down to 35 per cent disrupting the process of stabilisation; and the Narasimham Committee recommendation is that it should be brought down to 25 per cent in the course of three or four years. The recent bank scams have their origin partly in "greed" (and resultant fraud), partly in laxity of supervision by the bankers' bank (namely, the RBI), but esentially – and going back to the roots of the crisis – in the present economic policy framework of the government. The 1992-93 Budget and the policies announced therewith (or independently) have spurred a speculative increase in stock prices. The taxation and interest rate policies, the pace of abolition of the wealth tax on financial assets, the reduction of both corporate and personal income taxes, the increase in the interest rates (including interest on government securities), *and* a severe curtailment of investment on the infrastructure and key industries (in which major investments are still government owned), increased the investible savings of a certain class, with fewer opportunities for new private investments for the placement of such savings. Add the tacit encouragement to the bullish behaviour of the stock market, and you have the complete scenario.

It is difficult to conceive of a worse policy orientation which apparently intended, at the same time, to promote economic stabilisation and growth. What the policy succeeded in doing was to promote inflation, stagnation in output, a pause in new private investment, and as a consequence, unwarranted speculation in the limited market for existing scrips.

The relevance of the extensive quotations from the London *Economist*, by way of an introduction to the topic, is the irrelevance of high pulpit preachings by experts well-versed in the functioning of developed economies; indeed, there are limitations even therein of transplanting views based on one country's experience to another. To attempt such transplanation from the developed industrial countries to a developing economy is unwarranted. On recalls Radhakamal Mukerjee's warning as far back as 1916:

> ...the attempt to force systems and methods of industrial organisation, economic arrangements, and institutions, which have admirably suited a different geographic environment, will always be futile. (Preface to *The Foundations of Indian Economics*, Longmans Green, 1916)

The West will soon find this out in Eastern Europe. But do we, in India, also have to learn the hard way? ■

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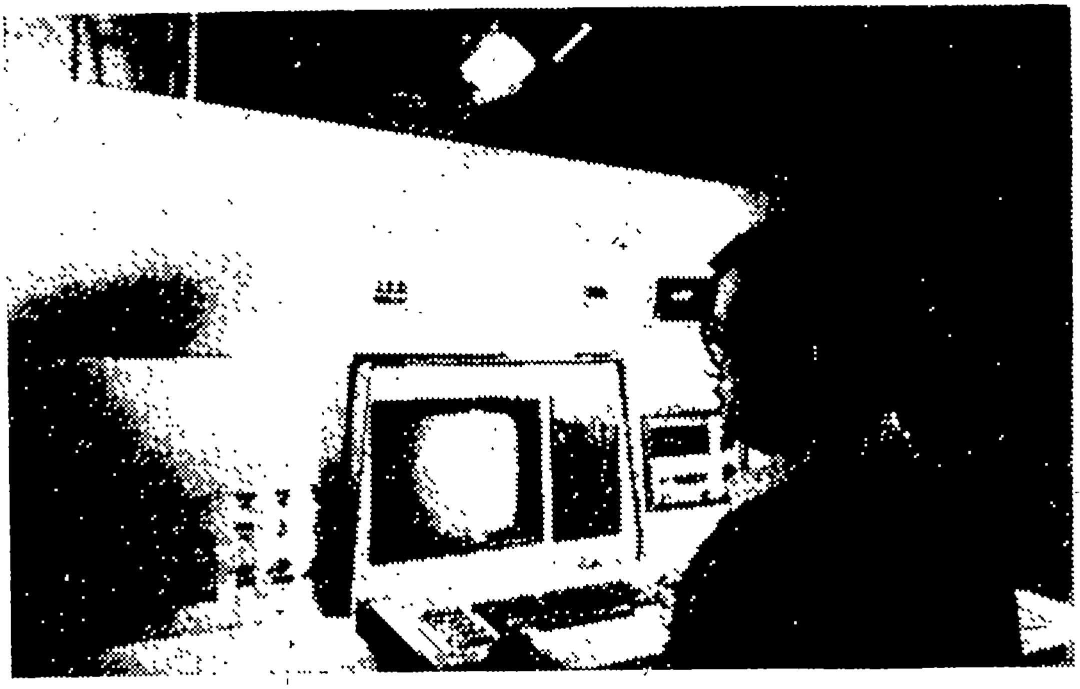

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Dr [illegible] Mitra
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EDITORIAL

The Human Angle

The conference of Chief Ministers of the States affected by Illegal Immigration from Bangladesh has decided to formulate a plan of action to prevent the outflow of people from that country into India and have it implemented jointly with the Centre. If this exercise is intended to pressurise the Bangladesh Government to concede the fact of such immigration, it is unexceptionable. But if both the Centre and the concerned State Governments of Assam, West Bengal, Tripura, Bihar, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram are really determined to push back the immigrants through coercive means, that would only aggravate the human dimension of the problem. After all, it is not just a matter of identifying persons who have crossed the border, they are human beings and need to be treated as such.

The first batch of 132 Bangladeshis — who were residing in Delhi — were deported to Bangladesh on the day of Prophet Mohammad's birthday and this led to vociferous protests in Dhaka with the Jamaat-e-Islami exploiting the issue and lending a communal colour to the Indian action. What is more, the way the deportees were treated with their hair clipped for the sake of easy identification amounted to a kind of humiliation which too has been played up in sections of the Bangladesh media in their attempt to fan anti-Indian sentiments. No doubt the thoughtless and callous bureaucratic attitude of the Union Home Ministry officials is responsible for such a reaction in Bangladesh. And this needs to be unequivocally decried.

The illegal immigration from Bangladesh in recent times is the product of two factors : (a) the mounting difficulties faced by Hindus (especially those in the lowest rungs of the social ladder) in Bangladesh due to the communal situation, and (b) the transformation of Bangladesh into an international bread-basket and the consequent mass pauperisation accompanied by large-scale unemployment. In the early years of such migration in the mid-seventies Hindus outnumbered Muslims thus testifying to their insecurity following the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Lately, however, the Muslim immigrants are far more in number than the Hindus engaged in border crossing. This is conclusive evidence of the economic reason being the motive force behind this outflow. As such the human dimension of the problem cannot for once be overlooked.

While the strains the immigration causes to India's economy are quite obvious — in Delhi alone the number of Bangladeshi immigrants is about four lakhs — one cannot be blind to the plight to which the deportees are being subjected. They have been rendered virtually stateless, the Bangladesh Government having refused to recognise them as Bangladeshis alleging that they are in effect Indians.

Our authorities must realise that neither such deportation nor the revival of the idea of constructing a barbed wire fence along the border can resolve this problem. The undeniable fact is that the Bangladeshis who have crossed over into India are better off on this side of the border that what they were on the other side. If conditions in India are worsening, those in Bangladesh are unbearable. Hence the immigrants can return only if the situation improves on the other side. For that to happen joint efforts are necessary with a subcontinental perspective which is lacking on all sides.

Indians have been highly perturbed over the treatment currently being meted out to foreigners in the eastern part of Germany by racist gangs. By trying to drive out Bangladeshis from Indian soil with the employment of force are we giving a better display of ourselves? Let us dispassionately introspect and try to eschew the double-standard that characterises our responses to events. For example, the BJP regards immigrants from Bangladesh as "refugees" in case they happen to be Hindus and as "foreigners" if they are Muslims.

The issue being highly sensitive it would be injudicious to adopt hasty steps with regard to such immigrants. The proposed bid of some of the North-Eastern Chief Ministers to send back the hapless populace fleeing a ruthless military regime in Myanmar and deport the Chakma refugees in Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh is all the more regrettable and needs to be reconsidered at the earliest precisely because such moves would also amount to a direct assault on human rights.

September 30 *S.C.*

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ECONOMY

Disastrous Course

ABHIJIT SEN

After months of nervousness and inaction, following a late monsoon and the fallout of the stock market and financial sector scam, the liberalisers are back in business. The withdrawal of fertiliser subsidies, soon after the end of the monsoon session of Parliament, was followed last fortnight by two major policy decisions announced in quick succession: the one to allow foreign financial institutions to invest in Indian stock markets with practically no restriction on repatriation of capital, capital gains or dividends, and the across-the-board hike in the prices of petroleum products averaging an increase of 18 per cent. As has become the standard practice since the present government embraced the International Monetary Fund-World Bank stabilisation and structural adjustment package, all these announcements were postponed till Parliament had adjourned and were timed so as to come just before the Finance Minister embarked on a visit abroad to plead his government's case before foreign creditors.

However, although obviously much more sensitive to reactions abroad than to the views of the elected representatives of the Indian people, the government was careful this time around to launch, as a prelude to its policy announcements, a carefully-orchestrated media campaign designed to convince the people that its policies were working and that the country was well and truly set on a path of economic recovery. Such a campaign was necessary now more than ever before because of the battering the credibility of the government's economic policy had taken as a result of the scam And the loyal media has once again risen to the occasion, giving wide publicity to the government's claims that inflation is down and on target towards the eight per cent rate promised to the IMF, that industrial production is up so that a five per cent growth may be possible this year, and that exports are recovering so that the balance of payments situation is now firmly under control.

Unfortunately for the country, however, the economic reality is much more sombre than this hype would have it. For a start, exports in the first four months of this financial year, though up 1.7 per cent compared to the corresponding months last year, are actually *less* by more than five per cent in dollar terms as compared to the same period two years ago. In the meantime, the changes announced in the Budget in February have caused imports to surge. In dollar terms these are now 23 per cent higher than last year and seven per cent higher than in 1990-91. As a result, the trade deficit for April-July 1992 is $2.1 billion as compared to $1.4 billion in April-July 1990. The latest projections, by both the IMF and the Reserve Bank of India, of the trade deficit for the entire fiscal year 1992-93 place this at around $6 billion—higher than in any year after 1985-86.

This is a truly extraordinary achievement by a government whose main justification for launching its new economic policies was to correct the profligate excess of imports over exports which led to the unsustainable build-up of external
debt during the Rajiv Gandhi years. In fact, the result of
policies followed so far has been to increase even further
gap between the country's external liabilities and the abilit
service these through foreign exchange earnings. A
whatever the propaganda it indulges in to keep up pu
support at home, the government has had to notify the I
recently that there has been a fundamental deterioratio
the country's balance of payments.

Similarly, the claim of renewed industrial growth is at t
only a half-truth. The claim is based on the fact that the in
of manufacturing output which declined by 1.4 per cent
year (as compared to 1990-91), recorded a four per c
increase when the first two months of the current fiscal y
are compared to the corresponding months of last year. H
ever, comparing the same two months of this year with
corresponding months of 1990 shows no growth at all, a
indeed, the index for May 1992 (the latest month for wh
data is available) is down two per cent compared to May 19
More important, the April-May average this year is down
per cent on the average for the last quarter of 1991-92, a
although some seasonal decline is expected, the season
corrected figures also show a decline of nine per cent betw
January-March and April-May 1992.

Thus, the claim of a renewal of growth is based o
somewhat spurious comparison of this year's poor per
mance with last year's even worse figures, and this is c
tradicted when one considers either the long-run trend ign
ing last year or the short-run trend comparing the most rec
figures with the immediately preceding quarter. On the b
of these more relevant comparisons, one should conclude t
manufacturing output continues to stagnate, and this is
particular importance because the failure of manufactur
output to recover despite the surge in imports following
removal of import compression measures negates
liberalisers' argument that import compression was the m
cause of poor growth last year.

●

SUCH flawed comparisons are also a feature of
government's claim that inflation has been brought dow
below eight per cent. This claim, which runs totally counte
the daily experience of any householder, is advanced by c
paring the latest provisional figures for the wholesale p
index with the revised figures for the corresponding week
year. This comparison has three problems. First, it amount
comparing the provisional figures for this year with the rev
figures for last year, and this imparts a downward bias o
least one per cent in the measurement of inflation, imply
for example, that the point-to-point annual inflation r
which is placed at 8.3 per cent for August is likely to be rev
upward to around 9.5 per cent when this August's rev
figures are finally made available in November.

Secondly, such point-to-point comparisons can be extre
misleading when the base for comparison is a period such as
or August last year when prices rose extremely rapidly as a re
of the ill-advised recourse to rupee devaluation. More meanin

(Continued on page

The author is an Associate Professor at the Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Human Rights : Basic Issues

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

The government's decision to set up a National Human Rights Commission is a significant indication of its being able to read the signs of the times. The Prime Minister has made the eloquent claim about his government's commitment to upholding human rights: "We must send a clear message that we do not tolerate violation of human rights." He at the same time conceded that "there is need to identify the weaknesses, the gaps between pronouncements and action, and between legislation and its implementation".

There is a veritable wave on the global plane today for the assertion of human rights. This is part of the democratic upsurge on a world scale. Long before the present ground-swell for human rights in many parts of the world, it is worth recalling that our country has had a long tradition of struggle for human rights. Before independence, this was known as the movement for civil liberties. In fact, this was an offshoot of the freedom struggle, because one of the tenets of the Indian independence movement was that it never deviated in its commitment to democracy, and therefore, its leaders upheld civil liberties.

In the thirties, Jawaharlal Nehru himself was once the President of the All India Civil Liberties' Union. This was not a party outfit of the Congress – its separate identity was always respected just as it could attract many personalities of a liberal disposition who would not toe the Congress line at that time. The Civil Liberties' Union survived after independence, though its complexion was perceptibly changed by then; the ruling Congress establishment lapsed into inactivity, while the radical and Left critics of the government became more prominent in it, and only a handful of liberals who could keep their rapport with the radical activists, only they stayed on in the Civil Liberties' Union. Chakkarai Chettiar, a grand old liberal from the South, was its last President, sometime about 1950-51. After that the organisation was hardly heard of, and it ceased to be even a letter-head organisation.

With the promulgation of the Constitution and the setting up of elected governments both at the Centre and the States, the impression went round that a civil liberties organisation would have little to do in the new democratic dispensation ushered in by the new Constitution. This was not a very far-fetched impression, particularly in the first two decades after independence. There prevailed in the country what can be termed as the Nehru stamp on our political functioning, and this spread over the entire public life. Cases of repression were few and far between in that period.

The scenario changed to a large extent after that period. Roughly it was from the mid-sixties that one could discern a perceptible change. An important area of conflict could be identified in the rural sector. Roughly this was the period of the Green Revolution. Alongwith increased food production, the Green Revolution brought about a significant change in agrarian relations. The increased food production as a result of the new agricultural technique set by the Green Revolution was not evenly distributed. It was cornered by the rich farmer community who owned the land and had the means to exploit the new facilities offered by the intensive cultivation prescribed by the Green Revolution. At the other end, the poor peasant and the agricultural labourer were reduced to the category of wage-earners. The old feudal relations were replaced by the more palpable class antagonism of the modern market. Clashes and tensions spread in many parts of the countryside.

This was the objective backdrop of the wave of militant activism in the rural sector, symolised by what has come to be known as Naxalism. The rich farmer, more powerful than his effete zamindar predecessor, could afford to keep his armed gang in place of the old lathials, and the militant activist also resorted to the gun – inspired at the beginning by Mao's teachings and clung on to them even when Maoism was dethroned on its native soil. It is worth recalling that about this time, a Union Home Ministry in-house survey of the new surge of armed conflicts in the countryside, delivered a very significant warning that the Green Revolution "might turn red".

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AT the national political level, the scene had changed considerably by then. The old monolith of power that the Congress had been at the time of independence was broken. The party began to lose power in different parts of the country, and with the onset of the seventies, the party itself got split. Followed a new phase of lacerated politics, in which all sorts of permutations and combinations among political parties led to almost chronic instability. Regional parties got an opening and the entire political spectrum became a veritable mosaic of motley combinations.

The inexorable climax was reached by Indira Gandhi's imposition of the Emergency, when democratic liberties were snuffed out and for the first time since independence, an authoritarian rule emerged in this country. The Emergency itself was the barometer of the political insecurity that gripped Indira Gandhi, and

(Continued on Page 32)

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Factors behind the Decision

MANNIKA CHOPRA

In February this year, the Foreign Secretary's office had occasion to reprimand India's High Commissioner to London, L.M. Singhvi. Singhvi, a lawyer by training, a diplomat by circumstance and a human rights activist by inclination had indulged in a minor bureaucratic misdemeanour: At various fora, he had seemed a shade too enthusiastic about the need for his government to form a Human Rights Commission (HRC) – a commitment that the Congress had already made in its election manifesto in 1991.

Singhvi, as President of the World Conference on Human Rights and moreover posted in a city in which Amnesty International (AI) has its headquarters, was only too conscious of the imperatives of having a squeaky-clean human rights record. He knew that human rights transgressions by countries as far removed as Peru and North Korea ate much more space on the front pages of Western newspapers than did the development activities of Third World countries.

He also knew that demonstrations in Brussels and other European capitals engineered by Amnesty International on human right violations in India made for excellent television copy.

Aoid Hussain, Singhvi's counterpart in America, had also realised the economic damage that a murky human rights record could create. In Washington, on June 26, the Burton Bill had been passed by the House of Representatives. The Bill had called for a cut of $24 million from the development assistance account meant for the Third World countries including India. The cuts, it had been indicated clearly, was a rap on the knuckles for India for increasing human rights infractions.

Hussain, now in India, was conscious even then of the strategem employed by the USA. "Certainly, pressure was and is used by powers like the USA to create an international moral opinion against India." However, he added, not only India but Pakistan too had suffered from this selective punishment referring to the ban of transfer of nuclear technology to that country.

The response was inevitable: Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao met with all the Chief Ministers to obtain their approval for finally setting up a National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). But the provocation was transparent. On March 16, 1992, the Union Minister for Home, S.B. Chavan, said in the Rajya Sabha that the proposed body would "counter the false and politically motivated propaganda by foreigners and Indian civil rights agencies".

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J.N. DIXIT, the Foreign Secretary too in a meeting with US Senators and Congressmen in Washington a week before Chavan's statement reiterated that the formation of the Commission was part of the Congress party's manifesto. Such a body, Dixit had affirmed, would be able to give an account of India's human rights situation to various international bodies.

By the end of April, V.N.Gadgil, the Congress's official spokesperson, had also stated in a press conference that such a Commission would act as a corrective to the biased and one-sided reports of the NGOs (non-governmental organisations). He had also said: "It would also be an effective answer to politically motivated international criticism." Besides, added Gadgil, the Congress party had promised to institute an HRC "by law within the first 365 days of Congress rule". What he didn't add was that the Congress party in its Karachi session in 1930 had also stressed its commitment to protect human rights.

This week Chavan took these party postures to logical conclusion: In a public meeting, Chavan extended an invitation to AI, a group which had been systematically barred from entering India, to "send a delegation to New Delhi within the next few weeks to engage in a meaningful discussion".

What had happened? Had the definition of human rights in India undergone a change? Had the moral passion that used to fire the macho state against criticism from foreign organisations burnt itself out? Had global paradigms shifted with even Amnesty International changing its position on human rights transgressions committed by militants?

In explanation, Yvonne Terlingen researcher, Asia region, AI, had said to this reporter in London last June: "The killings of civilians can never be accepted. The deliberate massacre of a particular community by another is as horrendous as the state killing innocent people." The AI press statement was later to echo the same sentiments.

(Continued on page 32)

Complexities of European Integration

ERIC GONSALVES

The hosannas uttered by many including this observer after the Maastricht summit have proved remature and somewhat hollow. Quantum leaps in uman organisation are not so easily achieved. Almost ertainly European integration will go forward. But it ust be slower and more complicated.

Nationalism remains a potent force. Major decision annot be imposed from above. The man on the street as to be involved and consulted. Community mechansms like the exchange rate mechanism (ERM) cannot utomatically ensure European solutions unless these re accepted to be in the national interest or that the uropean and national interests coincide. Assessments n Maastricht and the European Community's (EC) rogress need to be considerably revised.

The recent crisis in the ERM has been dissected at reat length. Its origins go back to divergence in policy mong the G-7 over some years. What needs to be eiterated is that divergent policies followed in the naional interest by two leading members of the EC—ritain and Germany—could only lead to an ultimate ollision. (This happened once before in 1982 when rance was forced to accept considerable alteration in conomic policy to stay in the ERM.) This was further ompounded by the independence from political control accorded to the Bundesbank in working monetary olicy, a prerogative that British politicians would refer to deny to the proposed European monetary uthority if they could.

The world is now moving towards the German posiion. But economists and financiers controlling central anks have also to be able to go beyond numbers. There re human and social considerations which can become owerful politics and must be factored in. Also the more owerful an economy the more it has to think in global erms.

Unfortunately there is not enough evidence of either oliticians or central bankers having this vision or taking nto account events beyond their national borders as oor nations know too well. Whether these lessons are eing learnt will only be known after some time. On this ill depend the future of the ERM and the management f the future European Community (EC).

The author, a distinguished diplomat now retired, was a Secretary in the External Affairs Ministry and India's Ambassador in Brussels.

The grand design for Europe has always had a major flaw. The desire to guard national sovereignty on the part of governments has ensured that European organs are accountable to a Council of Ministers. This functions on the basis of consensus, that is, the lowest common denominator especially is arrived at by compromises worked out in long and tiresome negotiations between technocrats and bureaucrats of the Commission and governments with the concurrence of their political masters. Further towards the worthy end of harmonising practices across the Community, the same group has issued innumerable regulations imposing unnecessary uniformity and interfering in many aspects of the daily life of a citizen.

The European Parliament functions mainly as an advisory body, national parliaments have become bystanders and the general public is often annoyed and frustrated. Maastricht saw the need to address the major defect but made no specific or far-reaching proposals. Almost immediately afterwards the Commission made fairly drastic suggestions that would have invested the Brussels bureaucracy with even more power. The simmering dissatisfaction suddenly burst in the open with the narrow "no" majority in the Danish referendum. Maastricht would not be accepted as a *fait accompli.* This encouraged dissent elsewhere which has surfaced and multiplied.

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NATIONALISM and the nation-state were given to the world by Western Europe. Demonstrative patriotism may no longer be the order of the day. But the sentiment clearly runs deep. There has also been a revival of far Right and neo-fascist groups which thrive on jingoism and nationalism. The rise of unemployment around Europe has generated chauvinism against the vast number of foreign workers. The prospect of Europe-wide job market without restrictions provide such groups fertile new ground where support can be canvassed. Overt and covert violence against all outsiders is on the rise. Genuine fears of loss of the national ethos of losing the benefits of earlier economic endeavours through Community decisions, etc. while being absorbed into a larger entity are now being fanned by more primitive emotions.

(Continued on page 34)

Maastricht Treaty after French Referendum

BHARATI SADASIVAM

By voting yes to the Maastricht Treaty, the French have saved it from certain death. The ratification ensures that the process of political and monetary union will continue, with the ultimate goal of a common regional currency by 1999 and a single market which will culminate in the creation of a second superpower, the United States of Europe.

But the narrow endorsement of the Treaty—less than 51 per cent of voters said "yes"—in a country which was one of the architects of the European Union holds several lessons that the leaders of the 12 nation European Community can ill-afford to ignore. Even among the most ardent Euro-enthusiasts the elation of the moment is tinged by sombre concern, bordering on pessimism, for the future.

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AT the heart of the considerable voter resistance in France to Maastricht is the deepening divide between EC governments and their 340 million people. In the words of Charles Pasqua, the Gaullist nationalist and vociferous leader of the "no" campaign, the fact that one in every two Frenchmen voted against the Treaty showed that they rejected a Europe that does not take people into account.

The Brussels' vision—shared by the media, the political and business establishment—of a federal, united prosperous European superstate which will, forever, bury the spectre of war between its member-nations has left most ordinary French cold. What they see is quite different: stubborn recession, rising unemployment made worse by the prospect of an influx of immigrants from poor EC nations and even the Third World in a frontier-free community, and a dilution of national sovereignty as unelected technocrats overrule elected representatives.

It was all this that made the middle and working classes in France so vulnerable to what the xenophobic Jean-Marie Le Pen summed up as "Maastricht means more unemployment, more taxes, more immigration and more crime". Such fears were not dispelled despite—or perhaps because of—the distribution of nearly 40 million copies of the text of the Treaty by the ruling Socialist Party.

Alongside, the deeper fears and resentment about fiscal and political domination by France's enlarged neighbour were evident in the strident anti-German tone to the campaign mounted by both proponents and opponents of the Maastricht accord. The racist attacks on foreigners by neo-Nazis in Rostock and elsewhere were used by both sides to boost their arguments for and against European unity and a closer union with Germany, prompting one political analyst to comment in the French newspaper, *Liberation*, that in France everyone is frightened of Germany.

The average French may not actually believe that resurgent racism denotes a return of Germany's old demons, but the incidents provide a focus to the widespread French inferiority complex in the face of Germany's superior technology and capitalisation, its undisputed economic supremacy and the Bundesbank's lead in determining the fate of individual EC currencies. The fears are the deepest among France's political elite, which has failed to come to terms with German reunification.

There is now a reciprocal anger and resentment on the other side of the Rhine, which could strike at the historical Franco-German alliance that has driven European unity for the last 40 years. The Germans' own escalating social and economic problems with reunification have led to a drop in approval for the single market from 42 to 24 per cent, according to a recent poll; only 16 per cent now see any benefits in EC membership.

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THE close shave the Treaty got in France will only accentuate such sentiments, making "post-Maastricht" a political nightmare for all the EC Governments which have to get the Treaty ratified by their Parliaments. The Treaty has run into rough weather in Britain, the current EC President, thanks to recession and the devaluation of the pound, and growing divisions on the issue even within the ruling Conservative Party.

Across the 12-nation community, domestic problems, resurgent nationalism and widespread fears about the costs of unity are beginning to form a powerful resistance to the Brussels notion of supranationalism. Not all pro-Europeans may agree with the fears expressed by a member of the EC Executive that the tensions brought to the fore during the French campaign have begun to tear the Community apart. But the first task of the summit, called by John Major next month, is undeniably to look at how, if at all, it can stop the drift. ■

(Courtesy: *The Times of India*)

Decentralised Planning and Cooperative Federalism

MALCOLM S. ADISESHIAH

This symposium on decentralised planning commemorates our dear friend, guide and colleague, Prof D. T Lakdawala. It is appropriate that on this memorable occasion and on this subject, I recall his advice on decentralised planning at the 1983 Bangalore seminar on Centre-State relations. A new government headed by the Janata Dal had been voted to power and in its Approach to the Eighth Five Year Plan it declared that democratic decentralisation covering both political and economic processes will require political will, as well as sustained pressure from peoples organisations. On this, Dr Lakdawala's advice was:

> Decentralisation is only a starting point to this end in the hope that the effective organisation of the people meant to bring them into the production process can be more successful at the lower parts. There is a fear based on past experience that at lower levels the vested interests are more powerful. This apprehension must be proved false if decentralisation is to hold the field.

We have now talked about decentralised planning for nearly half a century – from the First Five Year Plan (1950-55) Our actions, however, seem to move in the contrary direction. For instance, in agriculture which is actually a State subject, the Union's Plan share in 1991-1992 is 39 per cent of total Plan resources; in village and small industries, another State subject, the Union share is 46.47 per cent; in rural development it is 54.02 per cent; in social and women's welfare it is 79.02 per cent and in family welfare it is 100 per cent. The decentralisation of powers and finances as between the State Governments and local bodies – panchayats and municipal councils and corporations – is even worse. They have no powers even in areas which are clearly within their competence and responsibility like primary schools, primary health centres and sub-centres. Local bodies are being starved of funds, where generous grants and equitable tax sharing are inescapable. The Ashok Mehta Committee, for instance, estimated that if the State Plan expenditures and non-Plan development expenditures and non-development expenditure allocable to districts in 1977-78 were spent through the panchayati raj institutions, it would amount to Rs 8 crores per district (with an average of four panchayat councils) on which Rs 8 crores could be raised from banks and other sources.

This is the text of the Presidential Address of the author, one of the country's foremost economists and a former MP, a the D.T. Lakdawala Memorial Symposium on Decentralised Planning organised by the Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi on September 24, 1992.

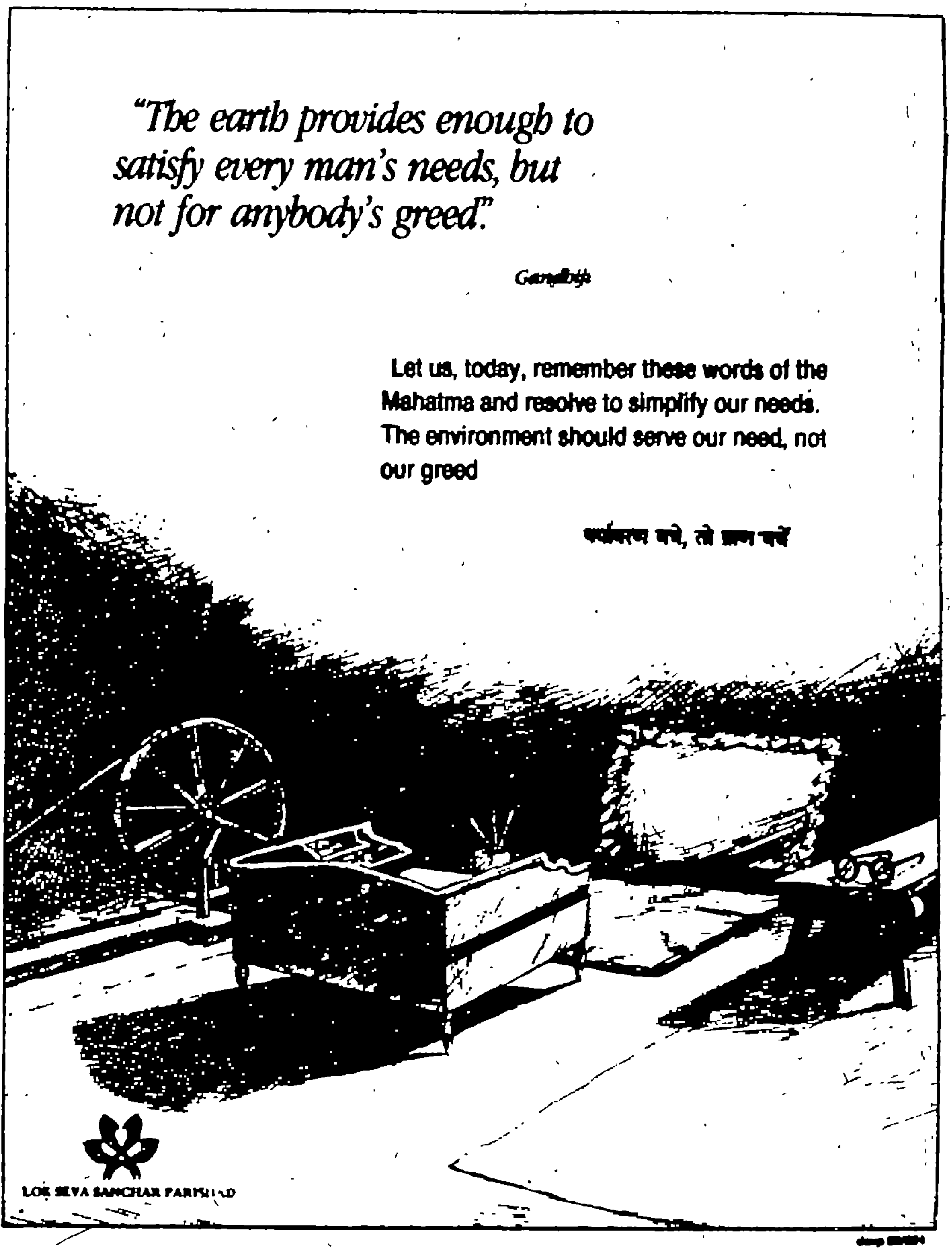
●

NOW what could be done to make decentralised planning real and effective? I suggest two basic measures, and stop there and leave it to the other participants to elaborate on them. The two measures are: first, regular periodic election to the local body – the three tier panchayat raj institutions recommended by the Balwant Ray Mehta Study Team and the Ashok Mehta Committee; and second, agrarian reform. The two are inter-related and should be acted upon simultaneously.

The first measure is to hold periodic elections at the panchayat level as the means of involving the people in the village in their developmemt. This is against the top-down philosophy which we have inherited and which we are practising from the day of the First Plan and which has resulted in the panchayati raj elections not being held for some or all the three tiers for 10 years in most States. Way back in 1952 Nehru warned that we had to start with the top-down approach in the First Plan, but that soon we had to develop a procedure whereby "people may feel that the Plan is something that has been evolved with their cooperation, so that they are responsible for its success". After two general elections, he realised that democracy with universal adult franchise does not throw up a pro-poor government. Looking around Parliament, he saw that instead of small farmers and landless labourers, who constitute 90 per cent of the rural people, being elected through adult suffrage, the elected representatives were well-to-do large and medium farmers.

The second measure is to ensure that the periodic panchayati raj elections proposed does not simply transfer power from the States, well-to-do elites to the rich rural elites. The RBI's all-India debt and investment surveys over three decades – 1961, 1971 and 1981 – show the skewed rural assets distribution with

(Continued on page 31)



"The earth provides enough to satisfy every man's needs, but not for anybody's greed."

Gandhiji

Let us, today, remember these words of the Mahatma and resolve to simplify our needs. The environment should serve our need, not our greed

पर्यावरण बचे, तो हम बचें

LOK SEVA SANCHAR PARISHAD

davp [illegible]

Freedom from Foreign Debt

I.G. PATEL

The author, a distinguished economist, is the former Chief Economic Advisor of the Government of India (1965-67), former Governor, Reserve Bank of India (1977-82), and former Director, London School of Economics and Political Science (1984-90). The following is the text of the Fifteenth Govind Ballabh Pant Memorial Lecture he delivered in New Delhi on September 20, 1992. —Editor

It is indeed a great honour to deliver the Govind Ballabh Pant Memorial Lecture for 1992. I did not have the privilege of meeting Pantji, much less of working with him. But Pantji belonged to that small but select band of men and women whom Gandhiji's satyagraha movement inscribed in the consciousness of my generation. His was a household name in Gujarat where I grew up; and, in many ways, Pantji, we thought, was like our own Sardar: a man of few words and firm intent, decisive in action and shrewd in judgement, a born leader and a statesman who could also settle down, with rare skill and persistence, to the less glamorous but more basic task of day-to-day administration. Such men are in short supply always and everywhere; and on this memorial occasion, we cannot but reflect that they are needed more in our country now than ever before.

Drift into Debt

It is also in memory of our struggle for independence that I have chosen the subject for my remarks this evening. That we are heavily indebted to the outside world at present is well-known; and, to say the least, most of us feel uneasy about it. We certanly did not embark on this path of borrowing abroad as a matter of deliberate choice. We simply drifted into it when, suddenly and unexpectedly, we ran into a foreign exchange crisis at the beginning of the Second Plan. The First Plan did not postulate any reliance on foreign services—except for a modest use of our own reserves. This was essentially true of the draft Second Plan as well. But something had to be done to shore up our reserves and to protect at least the core of the Plan when we lost a major part of our sterling balances in a matter of months.

Even then, our first response was to cash in on what we thought was our right. We had kept such large balances with the Bank of England for so many years that we thought we had a right to get an overdraft from the Bank when times were lean. Somewhat to our surprise, our request was politely but firmly rejected. Drawls on the Fund could not meet our needs which were far from temporary; and the World Bank had assessed our absorptive capacity and set a very modest limit to what we could borrow from it each year. There was thus no escape from dreaming up a case for government-to-government aid on concessional terms; and the circumstances towards the end of the fifties and in the early sixties were propitious for canvassing such an idea, particularly for India.

The Second Plan had elicited a great deal of academic interest and enthusiasm abroad. This was particularly true of the Centre for International Studies at the Massachusets Institute of Technology which was close to the powers that be in Washington. The MIT Professors and the World Bank Staff helped argue the case for concessional aid, which was best summed up in the theory of assisted take-off, and it became fashionable to speak of "aid to end all aid". A little later a more sophisticated version of this—the two-gap model—was advocated. Developing countries, it was argued, suffered from many rigidities which made it difficult for them to convert their savings into foreign exchange. The need for foreign support thus arose even when poor countries spared no effort to raise their savings. All this found ready acceptance among people already predisposed to support democratic India in the race against Communist China; and it was in this atmosphere that the United State Development Loan Fund was set up towards the close of the Eisenhower administration to give loans repayable in local currency—a device tailor-made to suit our needs. This was followed by the establishment of the Aid India Consortium and, later of the International Development Association. Let it be said also that this denouement owed not a little to the negotiating skills of our own civil servants, notably, of B.K.Nehru; and India can legitimately claim the credit for having ushered in the 'Age of Foreign Aid' in the post-War world.

There was, however, no jubilation in Indian hearts then that we had at long last found the silken route to self-sustaining growth. Most of our leaders, and certainly Panditji, were embarrassed by our predicament; and we tread to put as brave a face on it as we could. Initially, we even pretended that the Aid-India Consortium meetings were not really our affair but that of the World Bank; and we made it a point not to take part in the meetings except by way of a condescending farewell lunch. But this very effort at camouflage told its own tale and had soon to be abandoned.

The man in the street certainly did not feel proud of those who negotiated aid. I remember receiving a letter from my father a few months before his death in 1963. He said he felt very proud of me when I was sent abroad so often for what he thought was important work. But when he discovered that I always went abroad to negotiate a loan, he felt ashamed. He asked me to give up my job as he had not raised a son to get the country more and more into debt.

A few years later, I had a similar admonition from my father-in-law, the much-respected and now much missed Prof A.K.Dasgupta. In my Shastri Memorial Lecture on Foreign Aid I had referred to a conversation in which I had said that I was not ashamed of begging for my country as after all, I was not begging for myself. Prof Dasgupta could not understand how I could be so insensitive as to think that the self-respect of the country was less important than my own.

Questions for Our Time

A generation later, the situation is no better and is, in fact, even more desperate. Plan after Plan we have proclaimed our objective of self-reliance and of doing without foreign aid. Plan after Plan, the reliance on foreign assistance has grown. Commercial borrowing has not proved an escape or an alternative. The non-resident Indians may have their heart in the homeland but prefer to keep their cash elsewhere. Our indebtedness abroad has increased of late with geometric progression. It stands now at the staggering figure of some 75 billion dollar sand amounts to more than four-times our annual export earnings with a consequent debt-service ratio of around 30 per cent. These are magnitudes comparable to those that prevail in some of the more heavily indebted countries in South America.

Where is all this going to end? Do we not need now as a matter of the highest priority a clear, explicitly stated and time-bound policy on foreign indebtedness? What should this policy be? Should it seek total freedom from foreign debt or freedom from only some kinds of foreign debt? What exactly are the benefits we expect to derive from a policy of more or less total freedom from foreign debt? And despite the discouraging experience of the past three decades, can we say now that enough is enough and that, as a nation, we are prepared for the effort and the adjustment needed to achieve what most of us devoutly wish for? These are some of the questions to which I would like to give my subjective response this evening. I emphasise the word 'subjective' as in matters such as these, one's values and preferences are inextricably woven into the fabric of one's argument.

It does seem rather strange to speak of freedom from foreign debt at a time when we are constrained to borrow more from every conceivable source, including the International Monetary Fund. But the time when past excesses have created a crisis and have forced us to take bitter medicine is perhaps the best time to forge the will and say: "Never again. Never again shall we bring the country to the brink where it stood in the summer of 1991."

It is certainly nobody's contention that freedom from foreign debt can be secured except over a reasonable period of time. But setting a definite goal and target has this advantage: it ensures that whatever we do in the meanwhile is consistent with the target and is, indeed, a step towards it. This is why it is also necessary to be clear at the outset about what exactly we mean by freedom from foreign debt—or what I prefer to call, a climate and culture of self-reliance.

Contours of Freedom

Foreign indebtedness comes in many forms and it is certainly not necessary or desirable to seek freedom from all of them. Most people would, I think, agree that direct foreign investment can and indeed should be an enduring feature of our national life. The reasons for this lie not so much in the inflow of capital as in the induction of newer technologies and as a vehicle for the export of domestic goods and services. But if we are defining a goal, we cannot let matters rest just at that.

For one thing, it is equally important that there should be a healthy outflow of direct foreign investment from India also, if only because trade often presupposes some investment. If we want to export leather garments to Western countries, for example, we may well have to set up finishing and packing facilities in Italy or Spain. It is already time that liberalisation in this direction is a part of our immediate agenda.

Again, we can call ourselves truly free only when we do not have to be defensive about such restrictions as we may have to put on direct foreign investment. Nowhere is there a completely open door for direct foreign investment. Life changes and we need a degree of freedom to deal with circumstances yet to unfold. But we cannot achieve a balance in bargaining power as long as we have to contend with a balance of payments deficit which we seek to cover by attracting direct foreign investment. If it comes, it should be welcome. But we are not really free as long as we are constrained to talk of attracting foreign capital to cover a deficit.

The same considerations apply to other forms of private investment. The long-term objective must be to balance the external accounts and even to create a surplus without prior assumptions about any net inflow of commercial capital. If private foreign capital finds investment in India more profitable than elsewhere, there is no need to shun it—now or even in the distant future. But I think it still makes sense to say that policy itself must aim at balance irrespective of such flows; and, in any event, there should be no special concessions towards attracting such flows.

The one concession or incentive I would particularly warn against is government guarantees for private capital inflows. In a state of self-reliance, there should be no question of government guarantee for any kind of private foreign investment—direct or portfolio, by way of loan or a deposit. The only assurance that the government should give is that of convertibility into foreign exchange at the prevailing rate of exchange. I realise that we are far from reaching such a situation; but I submit that as a matter of discipline, we must be clear about the goal and take some steps towards it even in the short-run, if only to a limited extent. I would certainly hope that we are economical about giving government guarantees even from now on. If the Indian Railways or Air India or the Tatas or anyone else can borrow abroad on their own steam for long-term productive purposes, there is no need to limit such borrowing to any predetermined figure. But let us not repeat the folly of making Indian enterprises borrow abroad on the strength of government guarantees, particularly when the borrowing is not needed by the enterprises for their own investment but is intended to prop up the foreign exchange reserves of the country.

The temptation to bridge the balance of payments gap by encouraging short-term inflows of private capital needs to be shunned, particularly at the present juncture. Several countries have come to grief by encouraging such inflows to the point where they prop up the exchange rate and conceal the truly parlous state of the underlying realities of exports and imports. For the foreign investor, the exchange risk is eliminated by the artificially propped up exchange rate, and shifting money in and out of the country becomes highly profitable. But the whole house of cards comes down at the first sign of adversity, leaving the country hopelessly exposed.

It is in the context that there is urgent need to review our policy towards non-resident Indian deposits expressed in foreign currencies. The original justification was that the NRI deposits were slightly cheaper and more stable substitute for commercial loans. The cheapness is doubtful; and experience has shown that the NRI deposits are no less volatile than any other private short-term credits.

This leaves two other forms of foreign indebtedness—that to international institutions like the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank and, secondly, to other sovereign governments. In one sense, indebtedness to international institutions is worse than that to private financial institutions. The former is of necessity guaranteed by the government so that repayments have to be made even if the investments prove misguided or less productive than anticipated. Unlike in any other business transaction, the risk in borrowing from international institutions is virtually all on one side; and the prestige of the institutions ensures that payments due to them take precedence over everything else. Logically speaking then, one must be free from indebtedness to international institutions even before indebtedness to private financial institutions; and it certainly needs to be emphasised that as a long-term policy, the sequence of independence must be from international institutions first and private financial markets later, if at all. This is certainly the perception of the institutions themselves and of their major shareholders. Both of them advocate what is known as the "graduation policy" whereby borrowing countries are expected to graduate out of dependence on the International Development Association first, the World Bank next and private markets only thereafter, if ever.

Again, as a matter of practical political politics, there is no escape in the near future from much greater reliance on international institutions. But it is just as well to remember that they will not like us to be perpetual clients and would like our debt to them to stop growing soon and even to decline somewhat thereafter. I would, therefore, conclude that eventually at any rate, freedom from foreign debt must include freedom from indebtedness to the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank as well.

When it comes to indebtedness to foreign governments, the case for seeking complete freedom from it is perhaps the strongest. An enduring relationship of borrowers and debtors among sovereign states is not a healthy one to sustain; and it is doubtful if public opinion at home or abroad will support this vexatious and debatable relationship, decade after decade. From the purely political point of view, freedom from indebtedness to foreign governments must in fact take precedence over freedom from indebtedness to international institutions despite the fact that the former is often available on more concessional terms. Graduated steps towards this goal must be taken even from now on.

Now that Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union have entered a new phase, we should end forthwith the earlier chapter of a debtor/creditor relationship with all the erstwhile communist states. There is job enough at hand to deal with past obligations without creating new and additional ones. I would also end as soon as possible what might remain of the legacy of indebtedness to the Gulf countries in the aftermath of the two oil crises.

Within the Consortium, we should continue not to agree to any new donor participants. Nor should we be averse to declining future aid from any country with which the aid relationship becomes particularly vexatious. This is a possibility we may soon have to consider seriously vis-a-vis the United States from which we get rather modest aid and immoderate annoyances. Nothing needs to be done in a huff and in a spirit of hostility; and we should not forget the earlier US generosity to which I referred at the outset. But even good friends can agree that some things are proving more a strain than a cement for good relations and are better left behind in the interest of the friendship itself.

On a more general plane, there is no reason why we should not seek a reduction in our official debt by negotiation. If debts to much richer countries like Poland and Egypt could be written off, there is no reason why we should be singled out for martyrdom simply because we have honoured all our obligations so far.

Freedom from foreign debt then is neither a simple nor an absolute concept or objective, and it has to be approached in stages and in a certain sequence. The first sign-post obviously has got to be the elimination of the current account deficit which would put a stop to any further increase in indebtedness. During the intervening period, our debt will continue to increase. But the rate of increase should diminish from year to year, hopefully, at an increasing rate. If this process is allowed to continue for some more years, it would enable us to reduce progressively our total indebtedness. In the first phase, it may make sense to reduce our relative reliance on private financial markets rather than on international institutions or foreign governments or direct foreign investment. But once confidence is restored and balance is reached, we should aim to reduce the debt to foreign governments faster than the debt to international institutions.

While no such self-denial is necessary for direct foreign investment or private capital for productive investments, there has to be sooner or later a distinct change in the attitude to such private flows as well. Apart from the fact that they must be a two-way affair, all artificial props by way of guarantees or special concessions should be dispensed with. Once the goal is defined, some corrective steps may even begin immediately. Refraining from government guarantees, winding up short-term deposits and shortening the list of creditor countries, for example, can be symbols of self-restraint that would set the direction and pace of self-reliance and act as focal points for greater discipline.

Fruits of Freedom

But what in the ultimate analysis is the rationale for seeking to be free from foreign debt? What can we hope to gain from a climate and culture of self-reliance? Certainly not freedom from foreign influence. Nor an escape from international obligations. Whether we are indebted to the US and the World Bank or no, we would still be subject to pressures for accepting the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and for introducing a certain regime for patents and foreign investment. None of us can escape from the realities of unequal power; and membership of international institutions offers at best only limited immunity from the pressures of the rich and the powerful. But it would be idle to pretend that it does not make any difference, however small, to our bargaining power whether or not we have to knock at the door of others for special favours.

If experience is any guide the relationship between borrowers and lenders tends to be a bruising one. In our case, right from the word go, there have been pinpricks and vexations. First, there was the sharp disappointment when the promise of substantial Consortium aid did not materialise. Then came the trauma of devaluation and of President Johnson doling out food aid grain by grain, so to speak. In the seventies, the oil crisis made us dependent on aid from neighboring countries which only till the other day were members of the rupee zone. For some years, we were able to console ourselves that we had a special relationship with the Bank and the Fund as we were after all one of the Big Five on their Boards for many years. But even this illusion could not be maintained for long. And we are reminded week after week that the example of the US in aid relationship will soon be followed by Japan and Germany. The reasons for self-reliance then are essentially political. The rationale for freedom from foreign aid is freedom itself. Why else have we proclaimed this goal now for some three decades?

Even if it were simply a balm to our national pride and nothing else, it would still be valuable to be self-reliant. Societies do not survive on bread alone; and I venture to think that if our efforts to increase our efficiency and competitive power around the world are to succeed, we need a stronger appeal than that of sustaining a five or six per cent rate of growth or even of removing poverty. It would certainly evoke a much greater response from the people if it was put to them that certain policies are needed to stop our debt from growing by the end of the century and to eliminate all official debt by the year 2010. There is surely appeal in the argument that certain policies are needed to restore our national freedom during the lifetime of the present generation itself.

My generation, which is now on the way out, would certainly like to rid future generations of the burden of repaying debts that we have contracted. Whatever may be true of internal debt, external debt is a burden for the future generations. Much as we may console ourselves that the debts are accompanied by the inheritance of much valuable investment, the argument somehow lacks conviction.

Too much sensitivity about debts, it may be argued, is merely middle-class morality. Those who cannot look forward to a square meal a day may perhaps be less squeamish about things such as the burden on future generations or the freedom from foreign domination. I myself very much doubt this. But even if I have to make a concession to this point of view, I would rather make it in favour of people to people gestures of voluntary help and cooperation.

And finally, quite apart from anything else, let us not forget that the rest of the world is not willing to prop us up forever. The question is not whether but how soon we should reach the stage of self-reliance.

Feasibility of Freedom

About the meaning, scope and desirability of freedom from foreign debt then there is not likely to be much disagreement. But can such an objective be achieved in the foreseeable future? The answer to this question can only be attempted with reference to some long-term forecasts such as those included in the outline of the Eighth Five Year Plan that was published a few months ago.

The Eighth Five Year Plan postulates a rate of growth in gross domestic product of 5.6 per cent per annum as against the growth rate of 5.3 per cent achieved in 1985-92. Correspondingly, the rates of saving and investment show very modest increases—from 20.7 per cent to 21.6 per cent and from 23.0 per cent to 23.3 per cent respectively. The incremental capital-output ratio is actually assumed to decline somewhat from 4.3 in 1985-92 to 4.1 in 1992-97. The only major change during the two periods is in respect of the external sector where the growth rate in exports increases from 8.5 per cent per annum to 13.6 per cent per annum with only a modest increase in import growth from 7.5 per cent per annum to 8.4 per cent per annum. As a result, the current account deficit in the balance of payments declines from some 2.4 per cent of Gross Domestic Product in recent years to a little more than one per cent of GDP by the end of the Plan—that is, by 1997. Even so, our total external indebtedness will increase further during the Eighth Plan period by some 20 billion dollars, that is to a level of some 95 billion dollars. This would still be three times our export earnings as against some four times now, and the debt-servicing ratio at some 20 per cent would also remain uncomfortable.

Rough calculations would indicate, however, that if the assumptions in the Plan are maintained beyond 1997, we can certainly look forward to current account balance and a bit more by the end of the century. By then, our external debt will cease to grow and will, in all probability, have reached a level of some 100 to 105 billion dollars. If the same trends continue over the first decade of the twenty first century, we would have liquidated all official debt to foreign governments and the bulk of the debt to international institutions as well by the year 2010.

On the face of it, the objective of substantive freedom from foreign debt over the next 15 to 20 years is thus attainable if the assumptions underlying the Eighth Plan are realistic and can hold good for another ten to fifteen years. The model underlying the Eighth Plan is not easy to understand from such details as are available in the Executive Summary so far made public. It is intriguing how the substantial shift in resources to the external sector that it postulates is consistent with no change in the capital output ratio in the overall efficiency of the economy. Presumably, the assumption is that the gains in efficiency are neutralised by the worsening in the terms of trade necessary to improve the balance of payments.

Be that as it may, the central point remains: exports must increase much faster than imports; and the important question is whether we are prepared to wield the means required for achieving this result. What then are these means or policies and what is needed to implement them?

In theory, the answer is simple. We must improve at least to some extent on our current high rate of saving. Currently, the gap between investment and saving, that is, the deficit in the current account of the balance of payments, is of the order of 2.4 per cent of Gross Domestic Product. If investments and growth are not to suffer, our saving rate of some 21 per cent of GNP must increase by 2.4 percentage points by the end of the century and by perhaps another two or three percentage points over the first decade of the next century.

Even more importantly, we must steadily increase the efficiency of our industry and agriculture and services by exposing them more and more to competition from home and abroad, by encouraging innovations based on domestic research as well as foreign technology, and by improving the skills of our labour force generally. Distortions in the pattern of investment must be removed, particularly those that act against the external sector. In general, investment decisions must reflect relative profitability rather than social and other objectives which must be served, except marginally, by other policies, particularly fiscal ones.

Along with that, we must maintain sound macro-economic management which has two interrelated aspects. First, a sound budgetary and monetary policy which limits inflation and second, and appropriate exchange rate policy which maintains the competitiveness of our economy. The paradox is that while this requires a flexible exchange rate policy, we also need an environment of stable expectations which requires a more or less stable exchange-rate. The only way out of this paradox is a speedy return to a comparatively low rate of inflation and a growth in productivity at least as fast as in our major competitors. The alternative of devaluation is not an enduring one as a continuing and prolonged period of devaluation is surely a sign of failure rather than of flexibility or realism.

All this, I think, is familiar and well understood; and it is in line with the new economic policies initiated over the past year. My impression, however, is that there is not sufficient appreciation in the country of the difficulty as well as urgency of the problem; and it is certainly simplistic and complacent to narrow the task to the confines of the new economic policy alone. Indeed, if the new economic policies themselves are to take hold and succeed, they will need to be supported by changes in all aspects of our national life. We have to be prepared for far-reaching changes in our polity as much as in our economy, in our social attitudes as much as in our individual conduct and in foreign policy as much as in domestic policy. You will perhaps allow me to illustrate this by reference to a few things which are often overlooked and to which I attach particular importance.

Austerity

In India, we assume too readily that the current relatively high rate of saving in the country can be maintained easily, and even increased Plan after Plan. I am afraid so great is the lure of consumerism and so wide its spread through television and other media that we will need much greater efforts to inculcate the spirit of austerity among all classes if even the present rates of private savings are to be maintained. I am not in favour of banning or restricting administratively the production of all kinds of luxury goods. But surely they should be taxed heavily, and we need not get panicky if cars or refrigerators do not sell well for a few months. Investment in luxury production can also be discouraged by fiscal devices; and I for one would not yield to pressures for allowing foreign investment in every item of luxury consumption. Restricting the consumption of less essential goods has the added advantage of a direct impact on balance of payments, for such consumption is import-inten-

Too much talk of budget deficits should not obscure the basic point that it is people rather than governments who do the bulk of the saving and even of spending. It is their habits which are of prime importance so that everything possible has to be done to influence all sections of society towards greater thrift. People do suffer from money illusion so that incentives for savings might work, even if they are matched by higher taxes. Sometimes, even partially successful attempts such as those for discouraging the consumption of gold may have to be continued. If all that is difficult to control or administer is legitimised, there will be little left to social or national purpose. At any rate everything possible needs to be done to ensure that such consumption continues to be looked down upon socially, politically and religiously. Since gold ornaments and gold and silver holdings continue to attract wealth tax, surely an honest attempt must be made to ensure that this provision is strictly enforced. As things are, the implementation of this provision is nothing short of a mockery.

Accountability

As far as a steady increase in productivity and external competitiveness is concerned, it needs to be emphasised that this is necessary not just to increase exports at an adequate rate, but equally to restrict imports to manageable proportions without rationing or high customs duties. Excessive concentration on exports alone can thus be counterproductive. Indeed, we need a steady increase in efficiency all down the line. Even externally non-tradable goods and services such as power and transport must be efficiently provided if exports are to grow at desirable rates without excessive growth in imports. From this point of view, the constant reiteration of the need for an exit policy is also a bit unfortunate. It is necessary to let patients with terminal illness die without too long and lingering a pain. But it is far more important to improve the health of the entire population. And that is a very different and difficult agenda indeed.

By far the most important problem before us now is that of inculcating a new work ethic of efficiency and accountability. We cannot really have an efficient banking system or transport and communications service or even an efficient textile and sugar industry as long as organised labour—of all ranks—continues to indulge in negative and restrictive practices and politicians and judges pander routinely to such tactics. The rot has gone so far that bank staff can resist computerisation to such an extent that even the Reserve Bank of India finds it difficult to keep its books in order. I am afraid the time has long been overdue when our labour laws and their adjudication are brought in line with the requirements of competition and accountability. If need be, one should not be afraid of selective confrontation, and the issue of the computerisation of financial services is certainly an eminent candidate for this

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dividual effort or even from a large measure of correspondence between individual effort and individual well-being for the vast majority of the people. Even the scale of our collective effort depends on how far we are prepared to pull our individual weight. 'As you sow, so shall you reap' is a tenet of eternal significance. But we have dragged the country very far away from this over the past few decades. Politicians, economists, judges and journalists have encouraged the dependency syndrome by constant talk of the rights of man and the obligations of the state. Reversing gear here will take a lot of political courage and statesmanship.

The argument about privatisation is also ultimately about accountability. Who is ultimately accountable in any enterprise? Accountability is not easy even in modern private corporations; and one does not need a financial scam to remind us that even private enterprise—whether small or big, domestic or foreign—can at times be as inefficient as public enterprise and even worse. But with all that, I think it is still by and large true that there is a more solid core of accountability in private management and private ownership than in public enterprise; and that is why, to borrow from Churchill, private enterprise is the worst form of economic organisation except for all the others already tried.

I would draw two conclusions from this. First, instead of being defensive or apologetic about it, we should be far more energetic and imaginative about privatisation than we have been hitherto. We should not hesitate, for example, to negotiate bulk sales of shares in some public enterprises to private corporations whether domestic or foreign despite all the risks of malpractices in such a procedure. We should certainly not hesitate to contract out the management of public-majority enterprises to private organisations. Successful private managers could later have a prior claim to purchasing a slice of public equity.

Where privatisation is not feasible or otherwise considered undesirable, it may still be possible to create a core of accountability by laying down certain conventions and norms. Appointment as Chief Executives of persons who can serve for at least three five year terms will make it possible to reward those who are successful and weed out those who are not. In general, abolition of retirement limits altogether for senior staff combined with provision for compulsory retirement at an early stage will make for greater accountability. I, for one, believe that even public servants and technical and administrative staff can become excellent managers and entrepreneurs if they are suitably trained and equipped and are subject to a transparent system of rewards and punishment. The example of the French Civil Service is very instructive in this regard. Shareholding by workers and their participation in management can also help. But we have not yet taken decisive steps

and innovation needed can be generated from within an enterprise.

That is why there has to be an active role played by the State in providing good quality education, not just at the primary or secondary level but also at the university and the research level. I must admit I get rather frightened by the current fashion of pitting higher education against primary or secondary education and of talking glibly of eliminating all subsidies to higher education. Let us by all means have the courage to economise on higher education by restricting access only to those who can meet very high standards of admission, as poor quality higher education is a waste in more senses than one. But high quality higher education to all those who can take advantage of it will cost much more per student than what we currently spend in our universities and research institutions. It will certainly cost much more than what we can conceivably raise by higher fees. Downgrading higher education or denying it more funds cannot help when it comes to competing in global markets. It goes without saying that we must also provide good quality primary and secondary education to all children in the appropriate age-group as soon as we can. But all that means is that the budgets for education—as for health and extension services and social amenities—will have to grow steadily for many years to come in relation to national income. Similarly, the need for much greater public expenditure on research and promotion not just for agriculture and small industry but also for the organised sector of industry and services can hardly be minimised.

Fiscal Challenge

It is against this background that we have to measure the enormity of sound macro-economic management not just now but over the next two decades. However desirable on other counts, a mere transfer of the responsibility to borrow from State to State enterprises and the sale of public assets, they mark no real progress towards fiscal balance. What matters—if investment and social provision are not to suffer—is a reduction in expenditure on subsidies, administration and internal and external security and a rapid growth in revenues absolutely as well as in relation to national income. I am afraid this agenda is much more far-reaching and difficult than most people realise.

So far subsidies have been more talked of than tackled. Everyone seems to be willing to strike but afraid to wound; and the game of opening a new populist door before closing an old one continues. I shudder every time I hear of the extension of the public distribution system with or without better targeting. I am afraid better targeting will remain only on paper and, in any case, will create an administrative nightmare if at all taken seriously. In a democracy, if we are to

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ments, it is counter-productive to seriously run down administration, which is an essential part of a modern society.

It is in the area of defence and internal security, in addition to subsidies, that we must look for substantial restraint in government expenditure. But does anyone seriously believe that our defence expenditure can be kept in check without some bold departures in our foreign policy? Nor can our expenditure on internal security be kept within reasonable limits without a substantial realignment of Centre-State relations and of our policy towards different ethnic groups in the country. Unfortunately, while we have moved away from the dead centre in economic policy, we are still ensnared in the same web of yesterday's jargon and knee-jerk reactions in matters of foreign policy and in many aspects of domestic policy as well.

There is much talk nowadays of public expenditure but not enough of public revenues. But there is paramount need for raising revenue as a percentage of national income—not just marginally, but substantially. I feel rather uneasy about the current fashion of reducing direct taxes drastically. It is easy to see that an optimum rate of income tax should be somewhere between zero and a hundred per cent. At these extremes, the tax-yield would be zero. But there is no theory that can tell us where exactly the optimum lies. Much of the talk of lower taxes raising more revenues is merely wishful hearsay. I am not sure why a tax structure with a sixty per cent maximum rate, for example, would yield less than a maximum rate of forty per cent or even less which some recommend.

The task of ensuring much better compliance with our tax laws—for direct and indirect taxes—has also hardly yet begun; and we have a long way to go before we have in place a dynamic and less complicated system of indirect taxes which covers services as well as goods. Once again, it needs to be said that we cannot legitimise evasion by sliding down the road of lower and lower taxes and periodic amnesty of tax dodgers without evading our social and national responsibilities.

Exchange Rate

The second aspect of macro-economic management, namely, a sound management of the exchange rate is not so much a matter of policy as a culmination of sound policies in other areas. The term convertibility—whether partial or full—has been much abused of late even by those who should know better. A dual rate *per se* has nothing to do with convertibility; and a sound exchange rate policy requires a speedy return to a single rate. What we want is a unified and more or less stable exchange rate with little or no restrictions on current transactions although a good deal less than before on trade account. There should certainly be no question whatsoever of our returning soon to full convertibility, including that on capital account which we have not had since the beginning of World War II. Even on current account, invisibles, for example, pose very serious problems so that I would not proclaim too loudly a return to full convertibility even on current account over the next two or three years. And while trade liberalisation is important, it must be accompanied by prompt installation of judicious machinery, armed with adequate trade intelligence, to ensure that our economy is protected against dumping and our exporters are provided a level playing field. There should be no illusion that those who speak loudest of free trade are committed even to fair trade.

Distortions and Population

Even with a high rate of saving, growing efficiency at the level of each enterprise and sound macro-economic management, the agenda for self-reliance is hardly complete. The central task of shifting resources to the external sector—the sector that increases exports and keeps imports under check—requires more specific measures also by way of incentives; disincentives and removal of distortions. These measures can be very painful for some sections of the economy. One has only to ask what would be a sound energy policy for India which will reduce the very high dependence on imports of petroleum and petroleum products to appreciate how far-ranging will be the repercussions of such a policy. It is not only for budgetary reasons that one has to reduce subsidies generally and charge adequate prices for power and irrigation water and kerosene, for example. These undoubtedly unpopular and even harsh measures are necessary primarily for making resource allocation consistent with growing self-reliance.

On the greatest of all distortions—the failure of birth-rates to decline *pari passu* with death-rates—I need not say more than one thing. Better health facilities, education of women and higher standards of living generally will certainly help. But can we rest content with just that? Do we really not need measures which go beyond absolute voluntarism such as disincentives for larger families, social pressures and persuasion at places of work? The dividing line between social and economic pressure and coercion is thin. But should we, therefore, remain always at an arms length from such a line?

It is clear that whichever area of the challenge of self-reliance we look at requires very hard decisions which are bound to be divisive. Can we really rise to this challenge without a sharp break with the current political style in the country? Democracy cannot mean a perpetual state of warfare and vilification among political parties, based often on little more than personal egos. On that basis, no great national effort is possible; and I for one certainly hope and pray that the present talk of national consensus will soon be replaced by the reality of a broad-based and nonpartisan government which alone can tackle our formidable problems. It is always easy to say that this is not the time for a bold departure. But if not now, when? And if now, how?—except on the basis of a common perception of national urgency?

Wages of Failure

The task of achieving freedom from foreign debt even over as long a period as fifteen to twenty years is thus neither easy nor simple. Can we shorten this time-horizon or smoothen the path in any way? It will certainly help if the rest of the world achieves high rates of growth and is willing to put up with high rates of inflation and low real rates of interest as was the case generally in the 1970s. It would also help if we receive substantial debt relief. But such things are beyond our control. Can we then improve our chances of self-reliance by aiming at a slower rate of growth for a decade or two—say of 4.5 per cent per annum rather than 5.5 per cent per annum?

The temptation to think so is strong, and I succumb to it myself rather masochistically from time to time. But I am not sure that this alternative is a real one. A lower rate of growth in all probability will be the result of a slower growth in efficiency which would tend to reduce export elasticity and increase the elasticity of imports at the same time. It would take even longer to bridge the gap between them. Admittedly, growth rates can be slowed down by reducing investment rather than the growth of productivity. In purely accounting terms, even a two percentage point reduction in investment—which might lower growth rates by just half a percentage point—will cover the bulk of the current gap between investment and savings and consequently, the bulk of the deficit in the current account of balance of payment. But I am afraid there are more things in developing countries than are dreamt of in the identities of national income accountants. A policy of reducing investment deliberately in order to improve the balance of payments may well impale us on the cross of lower productivity growth as well.

I should perhaps make a nod here to the hope often expressed that our private gold hoards could be mobilised to raise resources for paying off our debts. I am afraid all such talk is wishful thinking—and even worse, an argument by smugglers and hoarders and processors of gold to get the best of both possible worlds. It is only draconian taxation of gold or a sharp policy-induced deflation which might bring out the gold hoards to any significant extent. The first, alas, is not practical politics; and the second needs no comment. I can only hope that if governments in India are not prepared to do what needs to be done, they would at least refrain from pretending that they are doing something.

What happens then if we are not able to muster the scale of effort required? Shall we continue with a prolonged dependence on others and the consequent abridgement of national freedom? I am afraid we shall end up even worse, simply as a basket case where the basket is filled with consumption support while investment support is progressively withdrawn; no one likes to put money in a country which has no demonstrable capacity to use it wisely. We then may well have freedom from foreign debt even sooner than otherwise. But that would be freedom of isolation, of the forgotten and the forsaken who wallow in their own misery and often inflict incalculable harm on themselves out of sheer desperation. We live in an age when we cannot even hide our shame in our own home. Whether we like it or not, we are already globalised, at least visually; always in the eye of others as others are in our eye. And that is a terrible fate for those who are marginalised in every other way.

Ladies and gentlemen, I hope I have not been alarmist and have not painted too bleak a picture. But we owe it to the memory of our struggle for independence no less than to ourselves and to future generations that we recover our elan and self-esteem by achieving a debtless economy. The pursuit of freedom from foreign debt is not just a vital necessity in an increasingly competitive world which is not yet free from the exigencies of unequal power. It is also an opportunity to shed much of the dead weight that has dragged us steadily down in the league of nations in recent years. On this fiftieth anniversary of the Quit India movement, it is perhaps time to take another national pledge : that we shall stand firm and united in our resolve to free India from fear and want without charity and without blandishments from any quarters, however well-meaning or powerful. Only so shall we recover our rightful place in the comity of nations and remain true to our own inheritance. ■

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"America First" Concept Generates Sino-US Cold War

BATUK VORA

As President George Bush spreads federal largesse in critical election regions, his actions are overturning key US, foreign policies, especially on world trade and Sino-US relations. Rise of "America First" nationalism overwhelming the Bush re-election campaign could be described as a major international development following the collapse of the former Soviet Union. Bush is being pushed to the corner by the Democrats and he is fighting for his life now.

In the space of one week, Bush announced $ 6 billion worth of sale of 150 F-16s by General Dynamics of Texas to Taiwan; $1 billion in grain export subsidies for American farmers; $755 million in disaster relief to Florida; decision to rebuild Homestead Air Force base in Florida again; his announcement of approval of the sale of 72 F-15s to Saudi Arabia by McDonnell Douglas in Missouri; dropping his opposition to modernising the M-1 tank and developing the Osprey 22 helicopters – all this were meant in the first instance to give jobs to the American workers and farmers, but its net effect was change in long-set American foreign and domestic policies.

What would be the results of his largesse?

The grain subsidies would cripple a half century US effort to bring about a unified world economy based on "free trade". Bush has sharply brought down the export prices of 30 million tons of grain, half the anticipated production this year. The European Community officials, already facing mounting internal opposition to unification, now look upon Bush as a hypocrite, as he had so far doggedly opposed the grain subsidies.

Till now the US had been pressing hard in the crucial Uruguay Round of the GATT talks for total abolition of farm export subsidies. Europeans, with their heavily subsidised agriculture had been fighting the US position tooth and nail. But all this has changed.

But if for the Europeans Bush is just a hypocrite, for China Bush is a demon who is destroying pillars of Sino-US normalisation of 1972 and 1982 by suddenly playing the Taiwan card. China's grand old man, Deng Xiaoping, exploded in rage at this and said: "The dagger goes both ways, we are right and determined, we will not compromise." Talk of retaliation abounds. China's sale of a large nuclear power plant to Iran came only as a first step.

The author, an erstwhile MLA of Gujarat, is currently a working journalist in San Francisco.

In 1959, when Nikita Khrushchev reneged on a nuclear-sharing pact he had concluded with the then Soviet ally China in 1957, Mao Zedong reacted with fury. The result was over decades of bitter enmity. Beijing clearly fears a repeat but this time with their new friend, the US.

Since 1972 the Chinese leaders had made a *de facto* alliance with the US a cornerstone of their entire foreign policy. Part of that alliance, the Chinese believed, was an agreement for peacefully bringing Taiwan and mainland China together. Now the Democratic and Republican Congressmen and Senators in Washington DC are talking of totally withdrawing from those joint communiques.

Bush is just following his adviser James Baker's direction. Switched from the State Department where Baker was implementing Bush's new world order all over the world, he is now urging Bush to deploy the full power of his Presidency to secure his re-election. According to the old Republican, Richard Nixon, Bush stands only 30 per cent chance of re-election.

Bush's actions, more than just buying votes, are response to the "America-first" nationalism that has been sweeping the country. Bush's talk of new world order pales before this new outcry of America first. Clinton is marching ahead with this and, if he wins, perhaps the first thing he might do is to let the Congress impose human rights conditions on China for the renewal of its most-favoured nation treatment. So why should Bush be left behind? Actually it was the meteoric Ross Perot candidacy who made this slogan popular. This is now strongly reflected in the Clinton campaign and in the American media all around.

This came at the time when a few top Chinese trade negotiators are discussing in Washington the threatened trade penalties. The US trade department issued a notice to the Chinese sometime back demanding free import of many American goods to China or face heavy tariff action on more than 5000 Chinese export items to the US.

An image of China is emerging in the US media which is unrecognisable to most Chinese. When Bill Clinton referred to the "dictators of Beijing", lumping them together with the Iraqi ruler, he was reflecting the current image of China that sees only a dismal human rights record and a failure to democratise.

Yet, millions of overseas Chinese (including Taiwanese) and other tourists, more than three million of them together, visited China in 1992 and their impressions are amply aired in the global Chinese language media. These media are often critical of what they see in China, but they also reflect an almost unanimous view among overseas Chinese and other visitors that China was now enjoying extraordinary growth and political stability.

The mood that prevailed in 1989 June at Tienanmen decisively changed in 1991. That summer vast stretches of East China, the wealthiest part of the country, suffered enormous floods. In the past thousands would have died. This time deaths were just a thousand and rampant pestilence was avoided. The homeless were housed and fed and most remarkable, despite this calamity, China's economic growth rate reached seven per cent that year and again went up to 10 per cent in 1992. China had finally a government that worked and did well for its people, who now number 1.2 billion.

As a recent tourist to Beijing (August-September) this writer witnessed this growth and stability in terms of clean, orderly streets without any unrest. Even now, one can see about 20-22 thousand people lining up every morning in front of Mao ZeDong's mausoleum in Tienanmen square to pay their homage.

"China is enjoying most secure period in the last 200 years", *Mainichi*, a leading Japanese daily recently observed. The now almost certain visit of Japan's emperor of China – even before he visits the United States – underscores Japan's new positive evaluation of its great neighbour. Soon to follow will be Russia's Boris Yeltsin.

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What explains the persistently distorted view of China in America? Americans have deep faith in their values and when they find little different elsewhere, they become enraged and angry. Consider for example, the huge display by the US media of an arrest of a 24-year old young Chinese dissident in Beijing, who tried to hold a press conference there on his specially planned visit to establish a branch of Democracy for China Fund under the open patronage of some Harvard University academicians.

That contrasted with the negligible coverage they offer of the vast changes currently underway. China is fast becoming an economic giant. China over the next few years is projected to purchase some $300 billion worth of goods and services from abroad, including the United States.

Unlike the former Soviet Union, China is modernising its economy. Hardline Marxists within the Communist Party of China are finding it harder to justify their orthodoxy on Marxist economic theories as they are found to be overwhelmed by the reform-minded cadres. The next fourteenth Party Congress scheduled in November-December this year is going to pass a formal resolution approving the transformation of the whole country towards market economy.

Given the tragic history of Sino-US relations, American politicians are making another major mistake of their time in skewing the realistic understanding of China. It is time they try to understand the depth of political, economic and cultural changes going on in this ancient and complex society.

The time of 1989 was different. Greed led many Communist leaders and cadres to lay their hands on scarce commodities at cheap planned prices to sell them at higher market prices, making big profits for themselves. The student mass at Tienanmen square were opposing the economic burdens and corruption more than anything else. New student groups such as "T-crowd"? – "T" was a short-term for American TOFEL examination foreign students had to take to get into American universities – wanted some outlet. The middle-aged educated people, crushed by the burden of work, family responsibilities and terrible living conditions, began to die prematurely. A wave of despair had spread throughout the educated class.

The Chinese leadership has now succeeded in bringing down the inflation rate from 17 per cent in 1988 to two to three per cent at present and are found to be trying hard at this time to keep a balance between their high growth rate and inflation rate. They are no doubt facing some highly complicated market problems for their public sector units and the *China Daily* reports indicate everyday one or the other major action plan to curb the huge inventory, subsidies, inefficiency and many such negative aspects of their economy.

Election or no election, American political game-playing with China, using its dormant Taiwan card, may ultimately boomerang on itself. ■

Young Man Whom Gandhiji Admired

AMIYA RAO

After India became independent there was virtually an epidemic of 'big-man' syndrome, and little men, petty men began to be badly affected. Fortunately for us there were a few—truly big—who remained immune to this disease and shunned all limelight with abhorrence. Guided by the light of truth, holding on firmly to their principles and inner conviction they went through life and entered the hearts of thousands of their countrymen and women without any effort to remain there forever. Bengal's Radharaman Mitra whom we lost only recently, belonged to this galaxy of the great. This is not an obituary of Radharaman but an analysis of his rare qualities which, though recognised, were hardly utilised by the people who knew him. Neither the intellectuals of Bengal, nor our Communist comrades felt any urge to seek his advice; his multifaceted experience, his uncommon talent, his deep rationality, and the range of his mind, which could have enriched their own thinking, are lost to us today. All the sentimental articles that have been pouring in since his passing away, will not make up for the cold indifference with which he was treated.

Radharaman was born in Shyambazar in February 1897, in one of the most destitute and indigent families of the middle class. He lost his mother at a very young age, and also his father, who had disappeared from his life unable to bear the pangs of hunger. Little Radharaman, desperately alone, had to face an existence unusually harsh and cruel. Under these circumstances any other child would either have perished, or be one more of those nameless, homeless urchins who roam the streets of Calcutta in hundreds. But, surprisingly, nothing like this happened. With incredible willpower, the little boy pulled himself up and keeping amazingly cool joined the Shyambazar Vidyasagar School as a student. Fortunately for him a remarkable man, a teacher in the Hindu School, took him under his wings, and under his fostering care Radharaman passed his Matriculation examination and took his BA degree also with credit. Possibly he completed his MA degree also in Philosophy.

But when he was still in school something extraordinary happened to him which gave a new turn to his thinking. It was an article on Gandhiji which appeared in a magazine edited by Shibnath Shastri; the story of Gandhiji's extraordinary struggle in South Africa against the powerful Whites, his supreme self-sacrifice, his crusade against the oppression of the Blacks and the Indians, and his single-handed fight to restore human dignity and human rights to the despondent oppressed, moved him deeply and he fell, as it were, under the spell of Gandhiji. He began to feel that men like Gandhiji seldom tread this earth, and told his friends: "If ever I have a Guru, it would be he."

Later, after he had gone through the writings of Romain Rolland and Holmes on Gandhiji, he came to the conclusion that Gandhiji was greater than Christ, even greater than Buddha, and resolved that he would offer his life at the feet of Gandhiji. Were these merely exuberant outpourings of an adolescent or did they have any substance in them? For the answer one has to look into the memoirs he has left, titled, *Mahatma Gandhi, Sabarmati Ashram and I*. Radharaman left no diary, nor did it occur to him to write his autobiography, so all that one knows of his personal life is through a couple of interviews he had given to reporters, a few articles he had written and the memoirs mentioned above. These memoirs are of great value as it reveals not only Radharaman himself but Gandhiji also. In this short piece we shall deal primarily with the memoir which has been narrated in great detail by Dhananjoy Das in his illuminating article (*Parichaya*, January-February 1992, pp. 99).

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DURING all these years Radharaman worshipped Gandhiji from afar, he was in his dreams, a being he had created with all his love and admiration. But soon came a day when he saw him in person. In 1917 after the arrest of the Home Rule leader, Mrs Besant, when a protest meeting was called by the Congress in Calcutta, Gandhiji came to attend it. Learning that he was staying with his son at Ezra Street, Radharaman cut his classes and started visiting the Ezra Street residence of Gandhi's son everyday without fail; he would sit quietly in a corner of the room among the milling crowd waiting to have Gandhiji's *darshan*. At last Gandhiji happened to notice this silent young man and calling him near asked: "Why do you come here every day?" "What do you want?" In that intensely emotional moment, the Guru to whom he had dedicated his life, actually asking him a question, all that Radharaman could say was: "I want to be near you." Gandhiji said that when his Sabarmati Ashram was ready, he would send for him, but meanwhile he should continue with his studies and keep in touch with him; if there is any problem he should write to him.

Time passed but there was no call from Gandhiji; he must have been immersed in the non-cooperation movement which was in full swing. Radharaman also was longing to throw himself into the movement which had begun in Calcutta, but he was too ill for that. Feeling that a change would do him good, he went to Etawah where he took up a teaching job in the local high school. But it was not long before the movement itself started knocking at his door. One day 500 students of his school went on strike;

Radharaman, ill or not, got busy, and before long the first National School of Etawah came up. Without delay he sent for his friend Bankim Mukerjee (who was to become one of the foremost leaders of the Communist Party in later years) to help him in his work.

After his arrival the two together went all around the district, contacting people, speaking to them in their own language, Urdu, explaining to them the significance of the movement, and arousing their latent love for the shackled nation. At every meeting he called, thousands turned up on their own from distant villages to hear him speak, while to the chagrin of senior leaders of the UP Congress, like Motilal Nehru and Pandit Malaviya, very few, if at all came to their meetings. The spark he had lighted in the minds of the dumb, the illiterate, spread from village to village, and Congress Committees sprang up not only in the district and subdivisions but in every *tehsil* and hamlet of the poor. The sudden transformation of the docile and the mute made the British Raj extremely uneasy, and they spotted the man responsible for the change. Radharaman was arrested, sentenced to one year and sent to Naini Central Jail to serve his term.

In 1922 after his release he wanted to return to Calcutta but the people of Etawah would not let their Mitraji, their beloved Etawah-Gandhi as they used to call him, leave them. They offered him the choice of three elective posts: membership of the Legislative Assembly, chairmanship of the District Board, or chairmanship of the Etawah city. Graciously refusing the great honour, Radharaman left.

With his whole soul longing for the Sabarmati Ashram, he came to Calcutta for a brief halt. In Calcutta he had no home to go to and with less than three rupees in his pocket, not enough money to buy him a meal, for days he lived on cheap half-cooked *roti* and tapwater, and at night he slept on the ledges of peoples' houses. But luckily for him, one day while loitering about, hungry and utterly exhausted, he suddenly came across an old school friend of his, Niren Roy. One could write reams on him, but to mention briefly he too had been inspired by Gandhiji and was in the non-cooperation movement. He was a well-known Professor of English, and one of the founders of *Parichaya*; in the thirties after long and detailed discussions with Radharaman on Marxism he understood the concept of Marxian ideology, and in the forties became an active member of the Communist Party. Hearing about the sorry plight of Radharaman he made him comfortable in his own house. After a few days Radharaman wrote to Maganlal Gandhi, who was in charge of the Sabarmati Ashram and was a nephew of Gandhiji, for permission to come and stay in the ashram. Permission secured, Radharaman arrived at the ashram in 1923, the ashram he had been dreaming about and longing to be a part of it for so many long years.

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GANDHIJI was not in Sabarmati, he was serving a six year sentence in the Yarwada Jail at that time. But Radharaman settled down, and began to observe all the rules, and customs of the *ashram* meticulously. Attendance to prayers twice a day was compulsory, so were spinning and weaving for eight hours – four hours at a stretch. Three-fourth of the inmates were related to Gandhiji, and the rest one-fourth came from outside. Each had to cook his own meals, but the food was abominable; the material for the cooking was so poor and so little, that it was almost impossible to keep well after eating that food; even the salt would not be enough to go round. One felt as if some sort of competition was going on as to who could eat the least quantity, yet carry on. Undaunted, Radharaman tried his best to adjust himself to his new surroundings; but however hard he tried, he could not master the skill of spinning and weaving and dyeing the khadi and this made him suffer from a sense of guilt. Added to this was his failure to understand the reason behind the belief that the longer the yarn the *charkha* spins after one turn, *swaraj* comes that much nearer; how could there be any connection between the yarn and *swaraj*, he wondered. Yet the inmates of the *ashram* went on repeating the slogan like *mantra*, believing in it.

One day he discovered that the *ashram* had a library but it was locked, he had the lock opened and found to his delight that the magnificent hall had huge almirahs all bursting with wonderful books running into thousands and written in many languages – both Indian and European. These were all gifts to the Mahatma from world-renowned men of genius; there were, for example, two or three sets of books, autographed by Romain Rolland himself as presents to Gandhiji. He suddenly found Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God Is Within You*, the only book of Tolstoy he had not read and had been wanting to read; so he had it issued and took it. Little did he imagine the rage, the turmoil in the *ashram* only because of his wanting to read a book. After the morning prayers were over, the dawn was yet to break, the work in the *ashram* was yet to start, Radharaman was reading the book in the light of the hurricane lantern, when a shadow fell on the page. Turning round he found Maganlal quietly standing behind his chair. "What are you reading?" he asked; when told that he was reading a book by Tolstoy, Maganlal flew into such a wild rage as if he had gone mad; taking the book away, he said: " Reading of books is forbidden in the ashram, no matter who wrote them or what they contained." It was in vain pleading with him that it was not a novel or a love story.

For sometime, questions and doubts had started tormenting Radharaman; he had been wondering if it was good for the ashram to have such frog-in-the-well attitude leading to complete isolation from the outside world, or to hold such odd views – utterly devoid of reason – which cannot be justified, or even to lead an existence which was so lifeless and mechanical. There was another young man, a Maharashtrian called Balacova, who also had been assailed by similar doubts; he taught spinning and weaving – but he was virtually a jack-of-all-trades, a pillar of the ashram, if he ever left the ashram would collapse it seemed. Balacova, however, was on the point of leaving "because," as he told Radharaman, "instead of helping me to improve and develop my intellect, the ashram had reduced me to an inert creature". But persuaded by Radharaman, he stayed on, on condition, which he made clear to Maganlal, that he must be allowed to reform the ashram. After one month of ashram-life Radharaman also left in spite of Maganlal's earnest request to stay on. But he promised to let him have his address when he had one. He kept this promise when he found a place – stay and meals included – for helping a gentleman in his writing of books in English and Bengali.

Meanwhile, Gandhiji had been released on health grounds, and while recuperating in Juhu, he sent him a telegram which said: "You had come to the ashram when I was away, Maganlal has told me everything about you. I need you most urgently, please come as soon as the wire reaches you." In reply Radharaman wrote: "I spent 17 months in the ashram and realised that I was not fit for the ashram, so I shall not be coming. Please forgive me."

After an exchange of letters for a couple of months, Mahatmaji wrote: "You do not have to spin or weave in the ashram; I would like you to teach English to the top-class boys in the Kathiawar National School which has come up only recently and bears my name. During holidays you can come to the ashram and stay with me. I do hope you will like the job and will not raise any objection." Even then Radharaman did not agree to the proposal, and did not go. One day to his surprise he found Narain Das, a nephew of Gandhiji, in his Telipara house. He said Gandhiji himself had sent him to fetch Radharaman, but if he refused, he would go on hunger-strike, and he actually sat on *dharna*, fasting for three full days. Acutely embarrassed, Radharaman sent him back, promising to follow him soon.

Sometime by the middle of 1924, Radharaman reached the ashram, met Gandhiji and then left for Rajkot to join the school. According to the arrangement, he returned to Sabarmati every Saturday to stay with Gandhiji, and left for Rajkot on Monday morning, and spent with Gandhiji all his long holidays.

Gandhiji would address the inmates after the morning prayers and sometimes he would ask them if they had anything to say, good or bad, about the ashram or if they felt that the ashram was just the same as before and had not changed at all. One day he called Radharaman by name, after the prayers were over, and asked: "Bhai Radharaman, is it true that though you are in the ashram you do not spin?" Radharaman did not remind him that he himself had written to him telling him that he need not spin or weave any more, but replied: "Yes, it is true." "But why not?" asked Gandhiji. Radharaman said: "I had joined the non-cooperation movement so that our country would be politically free; I cannot understand the connection between a *charkha* and political liberty." Putting his hands on his shoulders Gandhiji said: "I will see that you understand, it does not matter how long it takes me." Fondling him lovingly, he asked Radharaman: "Whom does a man love most, can you tell me?" Getting no reply, he himself answered the question. "Man loves his wife most, as I for instance, love Kasturba, then come the children, but it is not true at all that parents love all their children equally. I have four sons, but my youngest son Devdas I love most." Looking at Radharaman Gandhiji asked: "Do you know whom I love most in the world after Devdas?" Radharaman was silent Gandhiji told him, answering again his own question: "You." While talking like this, Gandhiji had not stopped caressing him, and every stroke of his finger made Radharaman's hair stand on end, as if some electric current of high voltage was passing through his nerves. Radharaman knew that Bapuji never told lies, besides why should he try to please with false words a small man like him, an insignificant humble fellow? Deeply moved, he told Gandhiji: "Bapuji, after what you said about me, I feel so tremendously honoured, so overwhelmed, that no word can express my feeling, but you must be knowing it already from the response of my body; I shall remain grateful to you forever and ever." Gandhiji then said: "I have three tasks yet to complete before I die; but to complete them if I have to die, I will die gladly. Do you know what they are?" This time Radharaman was not silent, he said: "I know them, they are removal of untouchability, Hindu-Muslim unity, and propagation of *charkha*." Gandhiji then said: "Well, what is the use of this life, why should I live at all if I cannot persuade one person, who is nearest and dearest to me, to take up spinning on the *charkha* – the *charkha* I am living for, and can die for if necessary." These words of Gandhiji, however, made no effect on Radharaman – the rationalist. He said, with great respect: "You called me here to explain to me the logic and the reason behind the link between spinning and freedom, but instead of appealing to my intellect, you are appealing to my sentiments and to my emotions." The argument was irrefutable. Gandhiji laughed and admitted that he was wrong. And the matter ended there.

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DAYS passed without any change in the old arrangement. But something interesting happened after a few months. One evening after prayers, one of the Bengali secretaries of Gandhiji, Krishnadas, asked: "How do you find the ashram?," Radharaman said: "Well, I used to think such a lot of these people before I came here, but now after seeing them I must say that ordinary men and women who pass their days looking after their families, even the coolies and labourers in the streets, are far better than these in the ashram." Krishnadas' comment was that Shiva is always surrounded by his goblins. Next day Krishnadas came to his room and told him that Gandhiji would like to see him. He heard that there was going to be a discussion on his views on the ashram which Krishnadas had dutifully informed Gandhiji. Gandhiji was spinning when Radharaman came in; putting his *charkha* away he said: "I would like to hear from you what you feel about the ashram; please do not hide anything, tell me the truth." Radharaman promised, and the discussion began; it covered over 20 topics, and lasted for five hours. We shall mention, only three here: (1) The ashram owns acres of land, with the help of two malis it gets only a small quantity of grain, but most of the land is lying fallow; why not let the ashram inmates work on the field, the produce will be plentiful, and buying from the bazar can be dispensed with. Do you think it is a good idea? (2) When the khadi workers disobeyed Maganlal and refused to weave the yarn, gifted to the ashram by the Ahmedabad Mill, did they do the right thing? (3) Should Maganlal have forbidden the reading of Tolstoy's book, *The Kingdom of God Is Within You*? Gandhiji heard Radharaman with great attention, and replied to each of them. To the first one Gandhiji said: "It is not possible to do without *malis*, for the inmates have plenty of other duties." His answer to the second was, khadi workers were wrong; lakhs of bundles of mill yarn were going waste, they should have used those. Regarding the third, "Maganlal was right; ashram forbids reading of books, it matters little, who had written or what they dealt with; the ashram is not meant for promoting intellectual culture, if someone thinks it does that, he has come to a wrong place; for that he ought to go to Gokhale's Servants of Indian Society at Poona, to Lajpat Rai's Servants of People's Society in Lahore or to Rabindranath's Shantiniketan. This is a place for poor, illiterate people who must work hard to earn their living."

After hearing Gandhiji, Radharaman realised that there was a fundamental difference between his own process of thinking and Gandhiji's. He stood up immediately and said: " Now that I have heard you, I cannot stay here a moment longer; I must leave immediately. But before leaving I would like to remind you that when I was in Calcutta, you often used to write to me to come back to the ashram, and I used to write saying, that I am unfit for the ashram; now I feel, after what you said, that the ashram is not fit for me. I am leaving." Gandhiji jumped up at once, and pressing him by his two shoulders, made him sit down on the ground, and said: "Listen, I shall feel deeply hurt if after all these talks and arguments you leave immediately. Stay here for one more month, you don't have to do any work; think things over and then if you feel that you should not or cannot continue to live here, come and tell me and then leave, I shall not be sorry." Radharaman agreed to stay on for a month and went on pondering over what he ought to do. But after three weeks he at last came to the conclusion that he was to leave. Soon after this, one afternoon Gandhiji sent for him and showed him the telegram which carried the news of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das's death. Gandhiji told him that he was leaving for Calcutta and will be staying at the house of Deshbandhu, if Radharaman decided to quit, he should see him there. Radharaman returned to Calcutta in June 1925, and looked up Gandhiji at C.R.Das' house. It appears Gandhiji was startled when he saw him and asked: "So, you really left the ashram?" "Yes," replied Radharaman. "You will never go back there?" asked Gandhiji. "No," said Radharaman. Gandhiji asked for the third time: "You won't go back there ever?" Radharaman said: "No."

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THUS ended Radharaman's association with the Sabarmati Ashram. This had no effect on his personal relationship with Gandhiji, that bond between the two was permanent and nothing could spoil it. This becomes clear, when after sometime Gandhiji sent him an unasked certificate, which deserves to be treasured; Gandhiji had written: 'Bhai Radharaman had come to the ashram twice. He came to learn something from me. I do not know what he has learnt from me, but I have learnt much more from him than he has from me." We are not aware if any of his disciples ever earned such high praise from Gandhiji, or even any of his most trusted co-worker and freedom fighter. But nobody will dispute the fact that though Radharaman strongly opposed Gandhiji's unscientific views on certain matters, he received from the noblest and the greatest personality of the twentieth century extraordinary affection and regard.

There is yet another letter from Gandhiji we would like to quote. This shows how deeply attached he was to Radharaman. In 1926 when Swamy Shraddhananda was killed in a communal riot in Delhi, Gandhiji went on a 21-day fast to expiate the sins of his countrymen, and to unite the erring Hindus and Muslims. On the eighteenth day of his fast, utterly exhausted and hovering between life and death, he had a feeling that his end was near; that was the time, with his hand trembling, he jotted down a few words on a postcard for Radharaman. The words are deeply moving and unforgettable: "I have been thinking for the past few days of those people who came into my life and left a deep impression upon me. This morning I have been thinking constantly of you. Remember me sometimes if I die." Radharaman wept like a child when he read this letter.

Radharaman was young, not even 30, when one glorious chapter of his life was over. His honesty and sincerity, his courage and candour, the unique catholicity of his mind had earned recognition and admiration from one of the finest minds of this century. We are not discussing here varied activities during the rest of his long life, which stretched a little over six decades.

But whether he was a committed Communist by conviction having been imprisoned in the Meerut conspiracy case, a great master of the theory of the Marxist ideology, a dynamic labour leader, or a dedicated trade unionist, he never forgot the one supreme lesson he had imbibed from the Guru of his younger days—his humanity and compassion for the oppressed. The self-effacing Radharaman has passed away; he is now above all praise or blame.

But when comes such another? ■

DANG TRIBALS

Report of Struggle and Repression

IRFAN ASGHARALI ENGINEER

The Peoples' Rights Organisation, Delhi, has sent us the following article from the author, a well-known activist working among the Dang tribals.
—Editor

Dang is the smallest district of Gujarat. It is a hilly terrain comprising dense forests – roughly about 1760 square-kilometres in area. Ninetyeight per cent of the total area is on record under the Forest Department. The population of Dang is about 1,43,000; 92 per cent of which are tribals, namely, Bhils, Kuknas, Varlis, Gamits, Kathudiyars, Kotwalias, Chaudharis, etc. There are no towns in the district. Ahwa and Waghal are the two biggest villages wherein some trading activities are carried out.

Decent Livelihood – A Struggle for Tribals

Traditionally, the tribals of Dang have been living on the forest land by cultivation and on forest produce. There always was a constructive dependence on forest and forest produce. The Britishers encroached upon some rights of the tribals of Dang by leasing the forest of Dang in 1842. After independence, the Indian Government further encroached upon the rights of the tribals. The rights of the tribals were, therefore, further restricted without any alternate means of livelihood. Thus while the government increasingly commercialised forests and raised its forest revenue and income, the tribals faced a severe survival problem. The forest laws of the country criminalised the existence of the tribals. For example, whereas the tribals were, prior to 1969, freely cultivating in the protected forest areas, after the 1968-69 survey (which was improperly done without following the due legal procedure), only 79,913 hectares of land was recorded as being cultivated by the tribals. On the rest of the land cultivation was prevented. Out of 79,913 hectares of land, the Forest Department forcibly took 21,154 hectares of land the brought it under plantation on land being cultivated by the tribals. Thus, not only was all land being cultivated not recorded in the 1968-69 survey but subsequently the land recorded as being cultivated by the tribals was also brought forcibly under forest cover, thereby snatching away the most important means of livelihood of the tribals. Thus on record, only about 30 per cent of the tribals are cultivators, but actually almost all the tribal families cultivate small patches of land which they have been doing for many years.

The government refuses to legalise this land cultivation and correct its land records. As a result the Forest Department terrorises the tribals cultivating the land – which may be merely shown as forest land – and mercilassly beats up the tribal, threatens him with cases and extracts bribes. The tribals are also beaten up for constructing their houses with teakwood from the forest and for fuel wood. After merciless beatings, bribes are inevitably extracted. Besides land cultivation and forest produce, there is very little employment available in Dang. Since there are no big farmers, agricultural labour is hardly employed. There are no industries; though the government reaps crores worth of forest revenue. From the district, very little is ploughed back for the development of the Dang district through construction of roads, schools, dispensaries, electrification, wells and water pumps for drinking water problems and other such developmental work. As a result, not only is Dang the most backward district of Gujarat, but there is also no employment available there. On an average a tribal family can expect only a month's employment in a year in forest plantation works and some meagre construction activities. Needless to say, the tribals are not paid minimum wages when employed as wage labourers.

Government's Scheme of Development

Tribals were never considered equal citizens in independent India. Therefore, the government not only does not think it worthwhile to fulfil the basic human necessities of the tribals. But the kind of development planned and envisaged by it, marginalise the tribals and further improvish them by reducing their access and rights over the forest. Large-scale commercial exploitation by felling trees according to the working plan formulated and selling timber, bamboo, etc. to the timber merchants and pulp mills is just the tip of the iceberg depleting the forests. Illegal fellings by organised gangs in conjunction with the Forest Department officials are very common. The tribals watch with anguish truckloads of timber crossing the borders of Dang – legal and illegal – while they are beaten to pulp for collecting even their fuelwood. They also see that the forest officials who came to Dang with merely a bagfull of belongings, when transferred after a few years, carry truckloads of goods not all of which can be accounted for from their legal earnings.

When a hill station was constructed in Saputara for the town people, the tribals were pushed out from their own land without any compensation worth the name. Brute force was used against the tribals sitting on hunger strike and all were evicted – lock, stock and barrel. After the protest was stifled, land was given at highly cheap rates to the private hotels with all modern facilities – including

STD, tar roads, etc.—in contrast to the other tribal villages of Dang. Today the hotel owners are reaping rich profits from the "development" while the evicted tribals beg in Saputara from the tourists for their square meal and even feed on the leftovers. In Waghai when land for an agricultural college was similarly acquired—today the staff colony and land for cultivation by the college are to be seen there—the tribals were evicted. The Galkund dam will similarly result in eviction of the tribals. The government has yet another plan—declare about one-fourth of Dang as a wild life sanctuary. In the name of protecting wild life, tribals will be evicted from these areas. Even dry leaf cannot be picked up within the boundaries of the wild life sanctuary. The painful eviction of the tribals—who do not have any other means of livelihood—from the wild life sanctuary areas will not be without resistance from the tribals and therefore is likely to entail brute force from the government.

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SUCH is the kind of state violence and terrorism unleashed on the tribals of Dang—beating up the tribals, extracting bribes, plantations on the land being cultivated by tribals since ages, abusing and molesting their women, implicating them in false cases, detaining them in illegal custody, pocketing the meagre developmental funds, denying them basic human facilities, forcibly preventing their legitimate access to the forest produce like fuelwood, timber, etc., felling their forest and finally even evicting them from their own habitat. Due to all this, today more than 50 per cent of the tribals leave their natural habitat grudgingly and migrate out as seasonal labourers with their entire family to labour like animals and earn their meals. This is actually their forcible eviction in other words. The legendary king of the forest has been reduced to a slave!

It is in these conditions that the Adivasi Bhoomiheen Kisan Hakk Samrakshan Samiti started organising the tribals since November 1989. It held several village level meetings and awareness programmes. It started mobilising the tribals and held several well-attended rallies. The tribals thus organised, refused to pay bribes and demanded that land being cultivated by them be regularised and each landless family be allotted five acres of land. The tribals resisted the beatings by the Forest Department officials and insisted on minimum wages. The tribals resisted the illegal fellings of the trees. The organisation published a booklet exposing the magnitude corruption of the forest officials totalling about Rs 40 crores.

The feudal-minded arrogant bureaucrats and local politicians could not tolerate the tribals organising themselves, asserting and looking at them straight in the eye. Besides, their illegal income running into lakhs was stopped. The bureaucrats retaliated. They came down heavily on the tribals. On May 5, 1990 44 tribals were arrested and eight of them, including two women, were severely beaten up by fists, lathis and kicks. One of them was a 67 year old fragile tribal. But they could not terrorise the tribals into leaving the organisation. On June 26, 1991 Kainuben and Soniben, tribals activists, were molested. On September 10, 1991 Rasul Nayak was hit on the head with an axe and robbed of his money. On October 10, 1991 all the crops of eight tribals families of Barda village, a stronghold of the organisation, was completely destroyed in an attack by the Forest Department hirelings. On November 20, 1991 the Forest Department personnel entered Kosimda village, another stronghold of the orgnisation, firing indiscriminately without any provocation. A tribal woman passing by was shot at from point blank range and killed. Taraben Pawar (24 years, Bhil) was the first martyr of the movement. In spite of all these repressive moves, the movement could not be suppressed. Rather it gained more and more strength. To placate the tribals, the government pumped in large funds to generate some employment through developmental work.

The Gujarat Government, together with the local elites and bureaucrats, decided to deal a heavier blow by systematic repression. More than 1000 SRPs were deployed in Dang. Tribal activists—Veersingh Vishram Patel and Irfan Asgharali Engineer—were first picked up from the hunger strike pandal (hunger strike was undertaken on January 8, 1992 to demand the arrest of the murderers of Taraben), and detained under the NSA. After detaining them under the NSA, on January 13 eight tribals activists were picked up by the SRP and severely beaten till one of them started vomitting blood. All of them were beaten from 9 PM to 12 PM continuously with special lathis and SRP boots. They were produced before the magistrate only after three days. While these eight were being tortured, the SRP fanned out in the villages, including Kosimda, and entered every house beating up the tribals, molesting women, robbing their scarce belongings, breaking their earthenware and other vessels including those in which food-grains are stored. They were threatened to leave the organisation or face dire consequences like the fate that befell Taraben.

From all the villages, people ran away to the forest to seek shelter with their children. They were scared to return to the houses. More than 100 tribals were arrested and beaten. On January 24 a 200 strong police party as well as Forest Department personnel went to Gira Dabdar village at 4 o'clock at night and entered every house beating up men, molesting woemen and robbing the tribals of their belongings including 60 axes, vessels, some chicken, Rs 500 with two steel plates, two batteries, etc! They also arrested seven people that night. Most of all those beaten in police lock-ups have severe body ache even today. The tribals were terrorised into silence. In the villages the SRPs camps are still there. In March, there were two alleged incidents of rape—one of a tribal woman from Bainaga, she was raped by four to five SRP men near the Dungarda camp another from Dhodhalpa. In Pimpri SRP camp too there have been allegations of rape of women. These women are, however, scared to complain or even talk about it before anyone.

On March 23 and 24 Veersingh Vishram Patel and Irfan Asgharali Engineer were unconditionally released due to the democratic movement and the wide campaign in their support. However, Veersingh was rearrested on April 5 from his residence. He is being denied bail and ill-treated. ■

State Terror Institutionalised in Sri Lanka

Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, the Left-wing SLFP leader of Sri Lanka, was currently in New Delhi on a lecture tour. Daughter of Sirimavo Bandaranaike and widow of the slain leader of the Sri Lanka Mahajana Pakshaya (SLMP), Vijaya Kumaratunga, Chandrika is an articulate intellectual enjoying considerable standing in Sri Lankan progressive circles. In this wideranging interview to Sumit Chakravartty, she speaks of her father, herself, her mother, her beliefs and convictions, the present state of affairs in Sri Lanka and the current attitude of India towards Sri Lanka.

—Editor

SC: Tell us something about yourself. Some reminiscences about your father.

CBK: I was fourteen plus when my father died. He was killed in 1959.

I had a habit from a very young age, I was interested in people. And my father had an open house which, a lot of people say, was one of the reasons why he got killed. There was no control at all. People used to just walk in whenever he was available. I used to eavesdrop in the conversations.

I was interested in what was going on and what he used to discuss. He was a very erudite person and very philosophical. So I liked to hear his ideas.

And I liked people, always. I used to go and sit on the laps of the people who used to come to talk to him.

Several things went over my head. But still I was influenced by a lot of things that came up in the course of conversations. It was this factor and the fact that I was a fighter in the house—not physically; but if I was told by my mother not to do something I would ask: "Why not?"...I used to say: "I won't do if you explain to me why I should not do." And my father used to appreciate this very much. He used to say: "Well done, well done, that is how you must be." And so many other conversations I remember.

Because of all this at some point of time, perhaps a year or two before he died, when he was the Prime Minister he used to tell a lot of people who were close to him and whom he liked and trusted—sometimes in my hearing also—"This is the one who is going to follow in my footsteps."

I had heard him tell this to one or two people. He had told it to many others. Some of them came back to me later and told me that is how my father thought of me and so, I must keep it up. But I did not think like that at that time and anyway I was not interested in politics then.

Another impression that I have of my father is that he was a very generous hearted man. As a human being he was very generous. He had a very good understanding of people's weaknesses.

I remember once when a beggar came—I remember this very vividly—for money. I was just hanging around. I heard the beggar say "My mother has died and I don't have money to go for the funeral." You know, even beggars were allowed to walk in through the gate.

SC: Oh, I see. Absolutely open house?

CBK: Absolutely.

This was not a normal beggar, he was a sort of poor man. He said: "I need some money to go and bury her." And my father just looked at him and said: "How many mothers do you have? This is the fifth time you are coming with the same story." But gave him all the same. And when the man walked off, I remember him telling somebody who was present, I can't make out now who it was: "Obviously the man had to make up that kind of story because he needs the money. So I didn't want him to think that I was a fool but I gave it all the same."

Well, there are so many other stories—that I am not personally participant of—of such generosity.

SC: When did you get interested in politics?

CBK: You mean consciously interested in politics? Well, I think the interest was there because unlike other children I used to be hobnobbing with the people. But conscious interest?—No.

I was interested in the sense that from age eight on I used to read all the newspapers that came to the house. After school and homework in the evening till dinner time I used to read the newspapers. Very often I had to be called several times for dinner while the others were at the table because I used to be so engrossed in the newspapers. And we had newspapers in Sinhala and English both.

So obviously there was some kind of interest. But conscious interest in politics came long after, when I went to Paris as a student.

SC: Not before that? Did the assassination of your father spur you on to something?

CBK: Well, in the sense that I am quoted as the person—and my mother throws this at me whenever I am critical of her politically—that when she was refusing to go into politics after my father's death, I am the one who gave the final push which threw her into politics.

SC: Which was?

CBK: Well, persuaded her into it. So many people tried to persuade her but she said "no", because all three of us were against it.

Then Felix Bandaranaike persuaded me saying: "Your father would have died for nothing if you allow the party to go to rack and ruin, and it can't be taken up by anybody else." This is true. Because my mother refused to take up the leadership and there was an election a few months after my father died, and the SLFP just lost it.

SC: She was not at all interested in politics?

CBK: She was. On the sidelines. She used to work for my father's election among the electorate. But always as his shadow.

SC: Why did Felix Bandaranaike say that if she does not become the leader...

CBK: Because already the party had gone to one election and just lost.

SC: Can you say that it was a kind of dynastic succession?

CBK: Automatically it fell on her. The party came and offered her the leadership. And she said: "No." So in that sense it was dynastic.

But because she said "no", and somebody else was made to lead the party and he could not pull it—he missed winning by a few seats. And there was another election three months later because the situation was very unstable at that time. It is for that that they persuaded her.

SC: By then she had agreed?

CBK: No, she agreed after the nomination. She refused point blank even after nomination time. And then Felix spoke to me just before the nomination, the day before. And he managed to persuade me. His final persuading argument was: "If she does not stand the party would be finished and the movement would be finished." And that convinced me. He spoke to me for two hours. And then I went and spoke to my brother and sister. My sister said: "I don't care either way." She was then sixteen-and-a half. And my brother was too young—he was just ten. He got persuaded very easily. And then I went and persuaded her finally.

Her argument against taking the leadership was : "My children are there. I don't want to take up the job because what will happen if I also get killed?"—kind of thing. Then the people had no argument.

But when I started arguing, finally she said : "OK." I was very emotional...

SC: Was it the family tradition that really mattered? I am asking the question because it is relevant to the whole subcontinent—Bangladesh, Pakistan, India.

CBK: No. As far as my understanding goes, after such a charismatic figure as my father the party was totally devoid of any leadership. Because of the way my father was killed there was such a wave of sympathy even those among whom he was not popular they said the only person who could really pull it best was his widow. That was there—but precisely because there was no clear leadership in the party.

SC: After finishing school you went to Paris...

CBK: Yes, I won a scholarship to Paris. I must tell you that my mother did not want any one of us to go into politics.

SC: She was worried about your security?

CBK: Perhaps, yes. And also she very clearly felt that sufficient number of members of the family had gone into politics and she wished that none of the children would do so.

So the dynastic feeling was not strongly there in our family. Except perhaps Anura the others don't feel like that at all.

So she kept us out. And that was the period we were doing our O levels and A levels and so on.

But we did get involved—my sister was in Oxford by then but Anura and I got involved—in her election in 1965. In 1966 there was a byelection...

SC: You were in college then?

CBK: I had passed out by then. I insisted I must be allowed to go and work in that byelection. It was my first baptism in active politics.

And in 1967 I went off to Paris. I arrived just before the 1968 student upsurge.

SC: I see, you were involved in it? With Cohen Bandit and the others?

CBK: I didn't know Cohen Bandit. I was involved at a lower level. But it was a very heady period for us. That was my baptism of fire into Left politics.

SC: Were you with the Trotskyites?

CBK: No, never. I was very anti-Trotskyite. Then I began reading Marx and Marxist texts. I was involved in a lot of student movements though we were not supposed to be because I was on a French Government scholarship. Not when my mother was in power—she was out of it.

SC: But you were not associated with any political party in France?

CBK: No. I was close to the CP (Moscow wing) and had a lot of friends. Used to do some work for them in their human rights organisations. I was close to the China wing, even closer than the Moscow wing, thinking-wise, to such an extent that I was called a Maoist in Sri Lanka.

I had a lot of friends in the Anarchist movements which sprang up at that and died their natural death later on. I used to work with them also.

SC: The Vietnam war was raging then...

CBK: Very much so. We were involved in Vietnam war demonstrations and I was in touch with Madam...

SC: Nguyen Thi Binh?

CBK: Was she stationed in Paris for a long time?

SC: Yes, she was the Foreign Minister of South Vietnam.

CBK: Well, I knew her too a little bit.

SC: Then how did you get in touch with Vijay? Was it back home or there itself?

CBK: No, no, Vijay had nothing to do with Paris. I met Vijay in 1977 because he contested from the SLFP.

I returned in 1972. I did my degree in three years and then I started my doctoral studies in Development Economics. I did my degree in Political Science under Charles Bettelheim as I told you.

I came back to Sri Lanka for data collection. I had actually finished the theoretical part of my research work.

SC: Was it on agrarian relations?

CBK: Yes. The thesis was on the study of the Articulation of Modes of Production in Agrarian Sri Lanka, that is, how the feudals articulate with the capitalists in Sri Lanka. That was strictly on Sri Lanka. That's why I went back home for data collection. And the land reforms programme was just on and I got thrown into that by the Minister, Hector Kobbekaduwa, who was really the SLFP's Presidential candidate. That was the end of my thesis unfortunately. I never had the time to finish it after that.

SC: So you did not go back?

CBK: I kept going back to see friends whenever I had the chance. And I kept in touch with them. A lot of my friends belonged to the intellectual circles of Paris. They used to come and stay with me back home and I used to go and stay with them in Paris. But as I had gone into active politics from land reforms I had very little time to write my thesis.

SC: But you did not contest any election?

CBK: I didn't want to.

SC: You were not interested in parliamentary politics as such?

CBK: I don't know. I was not interested in personal power. In fact the people, the SLFP organisations from six different electorates separately insisted that I contest from their respective electorates. And I refused. Perhaps two or three out of those six I would have won if I had contested. But I wasn't interested.

I did a lot of work for the party at the base, travelling two to three thousand miles every month for five years. Even the cooperative farms, the self-managed farms, etc. This was indirectly highly political—building up cadres not just for immediate political work but for future nation-building. Obviously they were very loyal to me whatever party I was in. So that was politicking at a wider level, let us say.

SC: You were having interaction with the Left as well?

CBK: Yes always, we were known to be the Left group of the party.

SC: But in spite of all these things the very fact that you were not able to tackle the unemployment problem in the south you could not prevent the emergence of the JVP.

CBK: Well, I was not in Sri Lanka then.

SC: No by you I don't mean you personally.

CBK: You mean the governments?

SC: Yes.

CBK: Well, I think we have failed.

But towards the end of the 1970-77 government in the 1974-77 period a lot of experiments was being tried. I mean not only the experiment with which I was involved, but so many others—small industrial projects, medium scale industrial projects. These could have, if done on an extensive scale, provided a lot of employment opportunities.

But what went wrong with our policies in general was that it was too closed an economy while the present one is too open.

SC: You mean too centralised.

CBK: Too centralised and very closed.

SC: Tell us something about Vijay. How did you come to know him?

CBK: I met Vijay during the election campaign of 1977 as he was contesting from the SLFP. I knew of him as a popular actor but I had never met him. He knew my brother-in-law well. But I had not met him. I in fact saw him face to face the day all the candidates of the SLFP were given their nomination papers.

SC: In 1977?

CBK: Yes, in the 1977 elections. In fact he was introduced to me by my brother Anura who also knew him quite well.

After that, during the election campaign he sort of started showing interest—inviting me to his electorate, that is, the one he was contesting from for meetings and all that.

Soon after the elections were over he kept dropping in and then, you know, some kind of an affair started. And the next year we were married.

SC: He remained in the SLFP for quite sometime, didn't he?

CBK: He joined the SLFP in the mid-seventies. We all left around the end of 1983, and formed the new party (SLMP) in January 1984

SC: What really happened? What was the reason for the split?

CBK: That is a long story. But to put it very briefly, there have always been different trends in the SLFP—Left, Right and Centrist. It is very similar to the Congress. It is not a very structured party. As a friend described, it is actually a meeting place of all the political trends in the country. You get very Left people, you get Left-of-Centre, you get a lot of Centrists who are in a majority.

SC: Right as well?

CBK: Yes, that's a minority. But after 1977 the Right-wing was consolidating itself.

SC: Inside the party?

CBK: Yes, but that was the trend in the country also.

SC: But the Right was represented by the UNP in general.

CBK: Yes, I am just talking of the minority Right-wing in the party. It was strong because some people in the party supported it including Anura.

SC: Where would you place Anura? Right-of-Centre?

CBK: Oh, definitely Right-of-Centre.

Because of the presence of Anura in that group it had a lot of validity. They started the rebellion inside the party in 1980, three years after the UNP came in. At that time the UNP took away my mother's civic rights—that was very unfair, you know the story—

SC: Reminiscent of what the Janata Party Government did to Mrs Gandhi.

CBK: That's right. But there the party stood by her.

SC: Yes.

CBK: Here the party was standing by my mother but the Right-wing began to trot out some theory that because she had lost her civic rights legally, a person without civic rights leading a party at election time can cause problems of legality. This in fact was a false theory. It could be very easily argued against.

But they went to the coutryside, not addressing big public meetings but seminars of prominent people with the party people, telling them that she should resign. It was a big rebellion in the party...

Now the rest of the party led by us, the progressive group inside the party—T.B.Lankaratnam, who was a founder member of the SLFP alongwith my father and also a very senior Minister, and Hector Kobbekaduwa, NWJ and myself and a lot of others—we fought for my mother's leadership simply because we felt that she was the only one who could pull it against Jayewardene. In fact we felt that this was a conspiracy which was hatched up by Jayewardene and Premadasa—very ruthless, they had made use of certain elements in the SLFP...

SC: Like?

CBK: I don't want to name them. People in the country know them.

Some were bought up but the bigger ones weren't bought up. But just by giving them little perks of office, they were used by Jayewardene and Premadasa.

This rebellion inside the party just consolidated the government. Because they used this beautifully saying that the son is trying to chase the mother out, the party is in sixes and sevens, and so on.

In fact that whole group of people—their membership was suspended. And we fought for them to be taken back into the party because we wanted to show unity again.

SC: So eventually the Left-wing in the SLFP came out of the party. But it wasn't connected with the developments on the ethnic front?

CBK: No, it wasn't connected with that. It was connected with the inner party conflict. And it came to a position where because we had fought against this Right-wing group and successfully they were very angry with us.

SC: By the way, Vijay had a Left-wing trend or was it your influence on him or both?

CBK: He had a Left-wing trend but it was certainly solidified after he met me. He wasn't very theoretical, though he had his heart in the right place as it were. And we used to discuss a lot at home and I think in ideas I must have influenced him to some extent. He influenced me in his style of politics—he was a very sincere and courageous politician.

SC: I don't want to go into the assassination of Vijay. But what made you return to the SLFP?

CBK: Following the debacle of the Opposition in the 1989 elections, a lot of people left the SLMP (the party formed by Vijay, Chandrika and other after they quit the SLFP—SC). By that they emphatically opposed the then SLMP leadership's open support to Premadasa.

I was in London at that time. I issued statements from London saying that the main programme of all the Opposition parties should be to oppose the terror of the government and others. And for that all forces in the Opposition should work together.

The fact is that the entire Left and the United Socialist Alliance (USA) won less than one per cent of the total votes polled in those elections. This was a clear indication of the erosion of the Left parties' social base. The SLFP had a mass support base whereas we had the dynamic youth with us. So by joining hands with the SLFP we were confident of building a viable Opposition in the country.

At that point we were working together with the SLFP in close alliance. While Mrs Bandaranaike, my mother, and others in the SLFP were for the emergence of a new alliance party this move was being opposed by the Right-wing in the SLFP. So the process of forming the alliance party kept getting delayed.

At that point the SLFP rank-and-file was getting desperate. And that is how there came an insistent demand from the SLFP base that I return to the SLFP. Wherever I went I was pressed to rejoin the party. Eventually in November last year, having realised that my return to the SLFP was the only alternative for me, I took the decision to rejoin the party.

At present our alliance has six parties—the SLFP, the Communist Party of Sri Lanka (CPSL), the Lanka Sama Samaj Party (LSSP), the Mahajana Eksath Peramuna (MEP), the Nava Sama Samaj Party (NSSP) and the Deshabhimukthi Janata Peramuna (DJP). We project a rational progressive view on all issues from the platform of this alliance.

Within some months of my rejoining the SLFP the party put out a programme presenting our view on how best to resolve the ethnic conflict. It was, however, opposed by the SLFP's Right-wing.

SC: I would just digress a bit from Sri Lanka. Since you are connected with Left politics, in the light of the kind of changes that have taken place worldwide do you consider yourself vindicated or do you feel betrayed? How do you evaluate whatever you had professed in the past with whatever has happened today? I want a very frank answer from you.

Do you still believe in the validity of socialism *per se*? Here I am not using the usual jargons.

CBK: It's a complicated answer. Well, not exactly complicated—it has to be a multi-dimensional answer. And I am being sincere.

I am still a socialist in the wider sense of the word.

SC: Not a social-democrat?

CBK: No. But I have also been realistic enough to accept a lot of the horrors that have been perpetrated in the socialist world. And...

SC: Not only in one country but the entire socialist world.

CBK: In the entire socialist bloc. It is very easy for some people to say, people who are diehard socialits or Marxists, that is because socialism was not properly practised. But I don't accept that.

Basically wrong things were done. Theoretically there were things that had to be rethought. Marx wrote and lived in the nineteenth century. The first half of the twentieth century itself saw so many far-reaching changes in the political scene in the world that Marx couldn't have dreamt. What happened in the first half of the twentieth century would have normally taken five centuries to happen historically. And probably Lenin and all other socialists did not rethink and do a research of that thinking.

What has happened in the socialist world probably had deep theoretical causes.

SC: The human spirit was smothered.

CBK: This is something that bothered me always. I have always been an anti-Stalinist. But that doesn't mean I was a Trotskyite after Trotsky turned out to be very adventurist.

SC: Were you Luxembourgist?

CBK: No, I don't want to put a label on it. Certainly I have been always more for people's socialism, for mass people's democratic movements—and I still believe in that.

SC: Then in that context do you think Gorbachev was on the right track?

CBK: Well, I thought, in the beginning, that Gorbachev was doing something extremely interesting. But he also went wrong.

SC: Perhaps the objective conditions were against him.

CBK: Yes, the objective conditions did not permit him to carry through his projects. He had too many oppositions from different sides. And, as you said, the situation had economically deteriorated so much that it was a bit late in the day.

I sincerely believe that he was doing something good; though a lot of socialists, Communits think that he was an agent who was placed there. A lot of people believe this in my country.

SC: They are those who don't know the reality in the former Soviet Union.

CBK: Probably so. I would have been very confused if I had lived at that time in Sri Lanka. Because the foreign news we get in Sri Lanka is very poor.

SC: Now coming back to what has happened in the socialist world, no doubt, phenomenal changes have taken place and the Right-wing is in power in most of the countries of what was the socialist world.

But what we find today is that the American Kremlinologists are now attacking the whole concept of revisionism—in the sense that Marxism in a revised form would be viable in today's condition—this is something they are seeking to debunk.

In that context do you think that it is necessary to update Marxism, apply it to the present conditions and even accepting the label of being a revisionist—because things have changed since Lenin's time really, and one has to think afresh whether Bernstein and Kautsky were that wrong.

Do you think that it is necessary to take that approach which would be very flexible—a kind of free Marxist approach—in the interest of Left politics as such?

CBK: The only thing that can save Left politics in the world context today is a free Marxist approach. Well, I don't think I like the label Marxist.

SC: Precisely.

CBK: A lot of free thinking is necessary. In fact I have been advocating that in my country.

SC: In concrete terms what would you suggest?

CBK: First and foremost a lot of thinking on the economic front—that's where the socialists failed.

SC: With regard to the market?

CBK: There is no doubt that even in Sri Lanka the kind of "socialistic" economy we tried under the SLFP and coalition governments had failed. The open market economy for the first time brought in 15 years ago by the present government has also failed.

The rate of growth in Sri Lanka, they say, is five-and-a-half per cent. If you cut down all the exaggerations it is about four-and-a-half which is a lot compared to the previous government's 2.1.

SC: What is it due to?

CBK: Vast increase in the service sector with accompanied decrease in both agricultural and industrial production.

SC: I see.

CBK: From 1977 upto date there has been constant reduction in agricultural and industrial production.

SC: That will not be good in the long run.

CBK: It is very bad. The whole economy is built on air, servicing and tourism. It is based on just importing and selling.

The entire medium and small scale industrial sector has been throttled to death. By 1977 the nascent local heavy industrial sector has quietly folded up. And the only ones which can exist are those that went into collaboration with the multinationals.

The only industry that has really flourished, I'll give you an example, is the assemblage industry. The foreign companies have come in a big way with Sri Lankan participation also. We import the material, we import the machinery, we just put all of them together, only the labour is local and we sell the product.

SC: What we call screw driver technology here.

CBK: Yes. We had a good base of textile manufacturing in Sri Lanka.

SC: Indigenous?

CBK: Yes, indigenous. From ancient times. And the government has gone into powerlooms with foreign aid. All those factories have been given for a song.

SC: To the foreigners?

CBK: Yes, to the foreigners who also include the Tatas and the Birlas. All for a song. The government gets hardly anything out of it. And the production is for export, not for the Sri Lankan market.

SC: Basically then it is a borrowed economy?

CBK: Totally borrowed economy.

SC: Is it the Singapore type?

CBK: Not really. Singapore developed because they had a very clear national industrial policy whereas we had none. To such an extent some of us are beginning to think—and this is all on World Bank instructions which the government follows...

SC: Hook, line and sinker?

CBK: Yes, hook, line and sinker. And we are beginning to think that the World Bank has—they are known to have demarcated various geographic regions of the world for various types of production—probably demarcated Sri Lanka, though they don't tell us, as a non-producing country which would be buying products from outside. It provides a small market and for assemblage because of its cheap labour.

SC: According to the trickle down theory that is being practised gradually it would lead to prosperity...

CBK: Well, in 15 years it has not led to it.

SC: Has it led to pauperisation of the people?

CBK: Eighty per cent of the population has seen its real incomes decrease in the last 15 years. Only 20 per cent has seen it increase, and of that 20 per cent only 10 per cent has had a real increase. In case of the other 10 per cent it has not decreased and the increase is marginal.

SC: What about the situation with regard to unemployment?

CBK: Unemployment has increased by leaps and bounds, particularly unemployment among the educated.

SC: That means discontent is there?

CBK: Discontent is there in a big way. And it also means something much more interesting which is that the open market economy followed in Sri Lanka is certainly not to be copied by India.

SC: That is very important.

CBK: But, obviously, I don't think India needs to copy it or would copy it because you already have a very strong industrial base. We never had. We were just building it up.

In the 1960-65 period, my mother's first government was the one that really built up industries. That was when the process just started. Then in 1970-1977 the government sort of consolidated it.

To cut a long story short, what I think would work is not a free-for-all, no-holds barred free market economy which benefits only the cronies—it is free only for the cronies—of the rich people, cronies and their relations, not for the rest of the population. Even not for the other capitalists of the country. Only for those who have the ear of the top people. The entire small capitalist class, the national entrepreneurial class, is destroyed in Sri Lanka. It's only the big ones which have tied up with the multinationals that can exist under this policy.

SC: Has the public sector been totally devalued?

CBK: It's being denationalised.

SC: According to World Bank instructions?

CBK: Yes.

SC: Could you give a figure of the number of public sector units that are being denationalised?

CBK: All of them are being denationalised.

SC: That means you don't have any public sector worth the name?

CBK: Well, the buses have been denationalised, the entire bus transport. Trains are goint to be. They have denationalised the refractories. Hardware corporations, steel corporations, five textile mills—the largest ones—were the first ones to meet that fate.

SC: But still it has not worked wonders.

CBK: No, it hasn't. All the industries have been denationalised, even the ones that were running at big profit.

And what is funny is that the government calls this denationalisation peoplistion. It's just the opposite: they take it away from the people and the state and give it to the private sector for a song. They could give for much more.

What I say is that if we have basicallly an open market economy, but a planned open maket economy where the government would come in to decide the priorities which means...

SC: Some form of regulation?

CBK: Yes. No quota systems and all that which are hated in our country—you know for basic needs the government must go for any amount of imports as long as the country is not self-sufficient—but the government, the state must decide what are the priority sectors they want to develop. Encourage those sectors as opposed to any old deals. And certain amount of control over even imports. Now anybody can import anything. Rather than importing toilet papers and so on, encourage the import of things that would help national production.

SC: Quite true.

CBK: And of course meet the basic needs. If you don't have them then import them.

SC: And also allow the subsidy to continue to some extent.

CBK: The poorer sections of the people, a lot of us now think, even in the liberal economy they have to be subsidised until the economy takes off at some point. But I would say not in the way in which we did earlier: that is, giving a free ration of food, but tighten up, in some way, the system to help them.

SC: Now, can you tell me how you assess the present regime. Especially one aspect which has not been highlighted in India: the way in which it handled the JVP. I was told that in the name of fighting the JVP many more people have been killed than at any point of time in the past.

CBK: I have been speaking about this. I spoke on the subject in my talk 'Democracy in Crisis' at the JNU. In today's meeting at the Saturday Club too I spoke of democracy in general because I thought that the gentlemen assembled did not know the exact situation. Well, the figures given very bluntly by the Amnesty International and the UN organisations...

SC: They are not correct?

CBK: They are correct even according to our assessment because we have a list a lot of people who have disappeared. The figures by those bodies come to anything between 20,000 and 50,000 killed by the government in the south within a period of about six or seven months. After they decimated the JVP on the pretext of getting rid of the JVP they killed a lot of democratic Opposition activists of the SLFP and the Left parties...

SC: A lot of them were missing.

CBK: Yes. A lot of them were found strewn on the road on burnt tyres—that is a kind of coercion, frightening people. And a lot have just disappeared we don't know where. Probably they were killed and thrown into the sea. One of the bodies came back and that made headlines all over the world. You know, the young journalist, Richard d'zoysa, was killed and thrown into the sea but somehow—unfortunately for the government—that body was washed ashore very fast before it deteriorated. Within a few hours it was washed ashore to the beach.

SC: Unfortunately some of the public figures who were going to Sri Lanka came back with completely different impressions—the situation had stabilised, the conditions were much better and so on and so forth.

CBK: You see, this is what I said today in my talk: the government in Sri Lanka has destroyed, denigrated and eroded democracy but managed to put up a democratic facade which has fooled a lot of people. And some people who wished to be fooled also had the excuse: we have Parliament, we have not done away with Parliament and said that there should be a one-party system like Idi Amin or somebody similar to him—probably we got that from our old civilisation, we know how to do it better but perhaps there are lots of others...

We totally denigrated democracy and the parliamentary system. Parliament itself has become a joke with thirteen amendments in six months. The President is not answerable to Parliament, he is not responsible before the law as long as he is the President. MPs can be sacked by Party Secretaries without any reference to the people who elected them. If the Party Secretary writes a letter to Parliament the man can be sacked. And new MPs can be appointed in their place—also by the Party Secretaries. Recently the rebel group within the UNP—led by Lalith Athulathmudali, Gamini Dissanayeke—who brought a motion of impeachment against the President, they were sacked like that.

So the very basis of democracy is not there. You elect a man and the Party Secretary does not like him because he has tried to fight for the people's rights or something like that, he is sacked. I can tell you so many other things on these lines.

Now about the killings. Since 1977 we have state terror institutionalised. For the first time in Sri Lanka state terror has been institutionalised as a major form of conflict resolution. And I would say that was one of the major causes for the JVP uprising in the south and the Tamil militants' uprising in the north and the east.

SC: Do you think you could have tried to enter into political negotiations with the JVP for a negotiated solution.

CBK: I think Prabhakaran and Vijayavira (the JVP's founder-leader) had the same kind of mentality. You cannot negotiate with them. It's very difficult. Of course, I don't give up hope but what I am saying is that Vijayavira would not have had the resonance he had, though he would have tried he wouldn't have had a movement like this if the government had not denied and blocked almost all parties of democratic opposition to the government.

SC: So you feel state terror became counter-productive?

CBK: Very counter-productive. Where has it been productive anyway? Well, it has been productive to them in the sense that they remained in power for 15 years but in the long run it is very counter-productive in society. And all the youth who had no other means of democratic protest went back to terror.

The JVP had a fairly long honeymoon with democracy after Vijayavira was released from jail in 1977, and it lasted upto 1983. J.R.Jayewardene released them and tried to use them against the SLFP. And they did it very well. For the first three years after his release all of Vijayvira's speeches were attacking the Bandaranaikes and all the Left leaders by name. Thereafter they started organising themselves. The government didn't like it and then started repression against the JVP and they were forced to go underground. That's when they started collecting arms and all these things happened.

In the north with the 1983 Black July the Tamil militant movement was just being born but they were not very organised or strong. If the government was willing to offer the Tamil people and the militant movement a good package of devolution, etc. short of Eelam, the war would never have started. But what did the government do? They said the Tamil militant youth are making too much noise. And in the same way that they managed to spread terror among the Sinhala masses and in fact cowed them down, they thought they could do the same with the Tamil militants and cow them down. But actually quite the opposite happened as you know. Because the situation was different, the conditions were different and so on.

SC: The present situation being what it is the way Premdasa has been trying to exterminate opposition to him, don't you think he is digging his own grave?

CBK: Well, in the long run he is digging his own grave but as far as he is concerned personally I suppose it doesn't matter. Because he has dug in long enough, Probably a lot of them have enriched themselves sufficiently for several generations. Politically he is digging his grave for his party and himself. The party is splitting up. Some of the most important people in the party have left. There will be a further split in the party very soon.

SC: How is he tackling the ethnic crisis?

CBK: He is not tackling it at all. He doesn't want to end it.

SC: What about Indo-Sri Lankan relations?

CBK: Indo-Sri Lankan relations are at a low ebb at the moment as we all know but I think India is taking the right stand.

SC: Which is non-interference?

CBK: Yes, non-interference, and waiting and watching. The situation is very very complicated at the moment because of what we have in the country—violence, terror perpetuated by the state, by the LTTE now that the JVP terror is over, the political opposition is very disorganised, for the first time it is coming together and trying to organise itself but still all that is in the crucible. And after the bad experience that India had of the IPKF in action I think the present policy is quite right.

SC: You had supported the 1987 Indo-Sri Lanka Accord.

CBK: Yes.

SC: Do you still support the accord?

CBK: Yes, I think it (the accord) was right. But I think it was wrong to have inducted 100,000 troops into Sri Lanka.

SC: The troops went there to implement the accord but they couldn't do so. So has the accord become infructuous?

CBK: Yes. But there is another way of doing it even now.

SC: How?

CBK: Well, as I have been saying, first the government has to be sincere in wanting to solve the problem and the present one I don't believe is wanting to really sove it. Thereafter they have to present a very clear package of what they are willing to give to the Tamil people. I am talking of the Tamil people and not the LTTE because I don't believe the LTTE comprise all the Tamil people.

In the north and the east the LTTE at the moment has successfully decimated all the other Tamil organisations, the other militant movements as well as the democratic ones like the TULF. They are the only active representatives of the Tamil people, and given the fact that they have had a bad experience of the Sri Lankan army the Tamil people have nobody else to turn except the LTTE who are physically present. But I think if a good package of what the government can offer—including devolution and various other things—is offered to the people...

SC: That is for both the Sinhalas and the Tamils—for all provinces, because it has to be uniform.

CBK: Well, yet but in these areas (the north and the east) there have to be special things... And immediately after that those have to be taken to the people there and there are ways and means of doing it even if the LTTE is blocking that. I believe in such a situation either the LTTE will have to agree or the people will force them to agree or they will be marginalised. Because the people want peace, they are not for Eelam—the majority of the Tamil people. Only those who are interested for themselves are for that, may be a minority of them. They want devolution, they want their place in the sun in the Sri Lankan society. If that is concretely given by a government in which they can have faith—that's very important, because they have been let down by so many Sri Lankan Governments—and thereafter a very quick resumption of the democratisation process in the north and the east, elections even if 15 or 20 per cent like in Punjab as a their own hands. At the moment they have not been given an alternative to the LTTE terrorism. And the LTTE has not only killed the Sri Lankan armymen or Sinhala villagers—they have physically eliminated every single person in their movement who talked of redemocratisation or negotiations and so on.

SC: Now if that is the perspective that is something that has to come from inside the coutry, India cannot pressurise the Sri Lankan Government to adopt that kind of a stance towards the Tamils.

CBK: I think it souldn't.

SC: What would be the effect of such a pressurisation in Sri Lanka?

CBK: Very adverse.

SC: So on the whole you think the course taken by the Government of India at the moment is correct.

CBK: For the moment it is correct. Unless, of course, things change objectively. One can then reconsider the situation. ■

ADISESHIAH : Cooperative Federalism

(Continued from page 7)

the bottom 39 per cent of rural households owning five per cent of all assets while the top five per cent own 46 per cent. NSS surveys and the agricultural census report increased marginal landholdings and landless labour households. In this situation, to hold panchayati raj elections will be to benefit the well-to-do farmers. In the case of Karnataka, for example, the Parishad-elected chairmen (*Adhya Kshana*) who were 33.3 per cent Lingayats owned 20 to 100 acres of land each and 22.2 per cent Vokkaligas owning 20-40 acres each. This contrasts with West Bengal where land reform was first carried out, with the result that 75 per cent of the chairmen and members of the three-tier structures of 46,000 elected members were small and marginal farmers. The problem faced by the country accounting for the major part of its maldevelopment expressed in massive poverty, increasing unemployment, growing inequality alongwith the social lack of basic needs caused by illiteracy, ill-health, infant mortality, lack of safe drinking water, rural roads and power and the safeguarding of the natural resources on which the people's livelihood depends which we today call self-sustained development, is to make the panchayati raj institutions responsible for drawing up realistic plans, of which the State and national plans will be the aggregate and the panchayati raj be the willing and effective executors of the plans that they have formulated.

But simply bringing planning down to the State and panchayat level will not solve the above problems faced by the country. The history of the country's development shows that all the measures to tackle poverty, generate employment (except for the Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Scheme), and promote a more equitable socio-economic order through the IRDP, NREP, JRY, SEPUP, DPAP, SFDA, MFAC and land reform have all emanated from the Union. The States have been allergic to these development programmes. Does this point to the validity of what Prof. Lakdawala called cooperative federalism which is expressed through the Planning Commission, National Development Council, the Inter-State Council and some of the Centrally sponsored schemes? ■

NIKHIL : Human Rights

(Continued from page 3)

it meant the total suppression of all civil liberties. Human rights became an anathema for the new establishment.

The experience of the Emergency made large sections of public opinion aware of the need for a movement of civil liberties and democratic rights, and the collapse of the Emergency provided the necessary fillip for such a movement. That was how there came up immedicately after the 1977 general elections, a whole host of organisations and initiatives among political workers, social activists, lawyers, journalists and among the youth which led to the formation of active human rights organisations in this country.

It was this new awareness in concerned sections of the public, coupled with an alerted press, that many of the blatant violations of human rights got exposed. The exposure of the killing of activists in custody with the pretence of their being victims of encounters with the police got widespread publicity and in some cases even judicial strictures. The barbarous torture of suspects in police lock-up; the inhuman incarceration of undertrial prisoners for years, sometimes for decades; the infamous Bhagalpur blinding – all these and many other forms of atrocity, the climax reaching with the pogrom of the Sikh community in November 1984 – all these could be highlighted in a systematic manner through the services of human rights organisations.

With the proliferation of social evils like dowry deaths, caste oppression and the revival of some of the superstitious practices, the role and responsibility of the human rights movements has grown tremendously in our country.

With the spread of violent confrontation between militant groups and the armed forces of the state involving largely police and paramilitary forces apart from the Army at some places, new challenges confronted the human rights organisations. These armed confrontations have international dimension as in the case of Kashmir and Punjab. Naturally, in such confrontations innocent people become the victim in many cases. This raises a very complex question before the human rights activists: should those who observe no human rights principles in dealing with their adversaries in open armed combat, be entitled to the protection of the human rights movement? In other words, should human rights be extended to those who in practice violate human rights in dealing with their adversaries?

This is a question which baffled many a society over the centuries. Much can be said in favour of it or in opposing it, and such debates can go on endlessly until the cattle come home.

There is the more fundamental question which has confronted many all over the world. In a society where there is blatant inequity, and a large section of the population is condemned, for no fault of their own, to a life of persecution and constant deprivation, would not any talk of defending human rights be reduced to a luxury of the rich and the powerful? The Black in the USA or South Africa, the Harijan in India, or the underdog in any of the developed society – is he or she not entitled to the Right to be Human before one talks of human rights to them? But there is another way of looking at the same question: if human rights are enforced and democratic liberties ensured, that itself helps to a large measure, the fight against social injustice.

One hopes that the National Human Rights Commission, when it is set up, will take up its mission with such basic issues in mind, and not reduce itself to a post office for complaints and grievances. ■

CHOPRA : Factors behind the Decision

(Continued from page 4)

But as usual, there was a difference between perception and reality. The perception of an NHRC as envisaged in the Congress manifesto in June 1991 saw the HRC as being an effective body looking into reports of violations of human rights for domestic reasons: "It was," explained Inder Mohan, President of the Indian People's Human Rights Commission, "A promise to stop state authorities from wilfully misusing their power. It was definitely not going to be an attempt at displaying a character certificate to the West. Neither was it contemplated to show-off India as a model country which had its very own HRC – similar to countries such as Australia, Canada or New Zealand."

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PERHAPS the remarks of the politicians enumerated above do make it sound that the NHRC had been constituted as a response to international criticism. This was the overriding impression amongst several human rights groups as well when they had heard of the formation of the HRC.

Ravi Nair, Executive Director of the South Asia Human Rights Documentation Centre, spoke of the "ungodly hurry" in which the government had activated itself. From the announcement of the committee – comprising five Chief Ministers: Bhairon Singh Shekhawat of Rajasthan, Jyoti Basu of West Bengal, Laloo Prasad Yadav of Bihar, N. Janaradhan Reddy, then in harness in Andhra Pradesh, Sudhakarrao Naik of Maharashtra and three Union Ministers, Sitaram Kesri (Welfare), Arjun Singh (Human Resource Development) and Vijaybhaskar Reddy (Law) – formed to look into the formation of the Commission to the preparation of its first report by October-end, all smacked of "outside pressure" rather than an indigenous, altruistic concern.

Tapan Bose, who heads a group called Initiative on Kashmir, questioned the *locus standi* of the HRC: "Does it mean that the citizen of India needs an HRC to protect the rights guaranteed by the Indian Constitution?"

But then it was expected that the human rights community would by and large be miffed. For hadn't Gadgil when he had made his announcement in April stated categorically that he would be inviting a dialogue on the proposal from all interested groups to "elicit a fair response"? And after several organisations like the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) and the proposal from all interested groups to "elicit a fair response'? And after several organisations like the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) and the People's Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR) had seemed interested, hadn't the Congress maintained a studied silence, that is until September 14?

Besides, explained Mohan, what credibility would the HRC have if the committee that was formed to look into the composition of the Commission included the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, a State which had 42 inquiries cases pending against it and the Chief Minister of West Bengal, where non-card holding citizens were routinely subjected to harassment? "Is this HRC a serious attempt of looking at viloations or is it a joke," queried a human rights activist.

●

A joke it isn't but a farce it may well turn out to be. Critics of the NHRC, and they are plenty, point to the weak links already evident in the formation of the Commission. Consider these recommendations made at the Chief Minister's September 14 conference on human rights:

> Even if it is conceived as a fact-finding body, the Commission may have to take up certain investigative actions to discharge its functions. What investigative agency the commission will use will, therefore, have to be laid down. It may not be advisable or feasible to create an independent investigative agency for the Commission. Clearly, the Commission would have to operate through the *existing* (emphasis added) investigative agencies such as the State police; criminal investigation departments of the State Government and the CBI.

The HRC will be depending on a network of State officials, perhaps even the very officials who have committed a breach of law in the first place!

Similarly consider the following:

> It will have to be considered whether the conduct of the armed forces and para-military forces should come within the purview of the proposed Commission.

Perhaps this clause implies that the armed forces are above the purview of the HRC. And that what occurred in Malliana in 1987 could happen again with impunity?

For many other critics, the legal parameters of the NHRC were not clear. Was the HRC meant to enquire into human rights infringements or could it refer cases to the judicial courts? The NHRC, it has been pointed out in the Congress manifesto, "is to investigate and adjudicate (on) complaints of violation of human rights". Would this status be different from past Commissions of Inquiry whose powers were usually confined to inquire, report and recommend measures?

If so, such a body could not be set up by merely an Ordinance but by a carefully structured Bill, which in all probability would be passed through Parliament this November.

Such an eventuality, would definitely chisel the role of the judiciary whose powers have been systematically decimated by the formation of various tribunals and the horrendous Terrorists and Disruptive Activities Act (TADA).

Given that India in the past had not even participated in the training provided by the United Nations's Advisory Service on Human Rights or in a programme initiated by the Commonwealth Secretariat on Human Rights, what future does such a Commission have in India? In this context, perhaps one should also mention the fate of the seven-volume Police Commission Report submitted in 1982 under the guidance of K.F. Rustomji. Then Rustomji had painstakingly enumerated the reasons as to why custodial rape took place. He had also submitted that considering the intolerable conditions that the police force worked under, it was not surprising that custodians of law went on the rampage every now and then. He had suggested that as much as the government, the police should also be made conscious of human rights – a stand which is slowly being articulated today.

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ULTIMATELY, Rustomji's Report remained confined to dusty shelves and some occasional quotes in articles on the police. What was the fate of other Commissions?

"What has happened to the recommendations of the Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribes Commission made by B.D.Sharma? Nothing! How many people realise that the Chairman of the Minorities Commission, Minoo Masani, resigned from his post because he was not even given an office," questioned Nair. The implication that the same fate could await the HRC was evident.

For activists like Nair, therefore, the NHRC and all that it stnads for can only be repudiated. "The NHRC will be rejected but it will be rejected from a position of informed dissent," said Nair finally.

But there are other human rights activists willing to give the government some time. Prominent amongst them is V.M. Tarkunde, *eminence grise* of the human rights lobby: "We should cooperate with the government on this. If the HRC is a fraud, we will expose it. If it is meaningful we will welcome it." Riaz Punjabi, an activist from Srinagar who shifted to the Capital, also offered support: "It is a step in the right direction. But it should be seen how it will link up with national security concerns."

AI had also offered cooperation in its press statement issued after the announcement of the NHRC: "Amnesty International is keenly interested in proposals that legislation concerning custodial deaths may be strengthened...While the modalities of such a Commission can obviously best be set by human rights experts in India....."

One overriding factor on which the success of the NHRC would be dependent on the composition of its members. It is almost certain that former Chief Justice P.N. Bhagwati will have a role to play in the Commission. (Reportedly, he had a one-hour meeting with the Home Minister last week.) Another name being mentioned is that of B.G.Verghese, former Editor of the *Indian Express* whose standing, at least among local and international human rights organisations, is currently low. (Verghese had in a Press Council report on the alleged rapes of some women in Konan-Poshwara in the

Just as important as the composition of the Commission is the area of its functioning. Several questions need to be asked: If it is to be set up by Parliament would it enjoy absolute autonomy and freedom from government control? Would it be independently financed to guarantee this autonomy? Most important, affirmed Tarkunde, for the credibility of the HRC to be ensured it would be necessary for it to interact with the NGOs — both at the national and international levels.

Given the fate of past Commissions, it perhaps wc be asking for too much for all these stipulations tc adhered to.

Nevertheless, with international organisations like and Asia Watch painting a dreary picture of human ri in India, the need for developing countries like Indi vocalise their stand is greater then ever. And such as perhaps the NHRC would be able to preform this tas

(Courtesy: The Sunday Obse

GONSALVES : European Integration

(Continued from page 5)

At the other end of the spectrum is the phenomenon of the rise of smaller ethnic groups in Europe and elsewhere. A more democratic world, greater affluence and technological advances resulting in a communication and information revolution have ensured that these groups are acquiring a clearer and more coherent identity. This too alarms both the Rightists and the old style ideological politicians who realise that as such groups acquire a growing role in the European structure it will be to their detriment. Germany has its autonomous Lander and Belgium its almost independent provinces but few politicians at Westminster are reconciled to a local parliament in Edinburgh or Belfast. However, decentralisation is inevitable and cannot be put off. As it reduces the individual's total relationship with the nation-state, it will probably make the Community more easily acceptable in the long run. Again the need arises for many careful adjustments that cannot and should not be made in haste.

The need to inculcate a sense of pride in being European is now being realised. Also the advantages a united Europe will offer to the next generation are realised but not fully appreciated. However, it is possible that the tide has turned with the French referendum. The large turnout and a narrow "yes" vote came despite the most adverse circumstances of a lame duck government and the looming ERM crisis.

Already the Danes are considering a fresh referendum during 1993 provided some not too fundamental revisions are made in the Maastricht Treaty. Italy has swallowed a considerable dose of bitter medicine of economic reform. The advantages she has obtained from the long Europe connection are then to be seen and despite the weaknesses of the political establishment, there seems to be hope that the Italians will not renege as they have done in the past. The British leadership has the most difficult task assailed as they are from the Left and the Right including the redoubtable Mrs Thatcher. Besides, they have to rise above the ignoring of a total failure of their European policy during their Presidency of the Community.

Hopefully the Germans and the French as well as the British will have enough statesmanship to find the necessary face-saving formula while also arriving at a common stand on the revisions. If the British economy is to fit into the global economy by 2000, it is in need of drastic reform. The ERM (like the IMF for India) was to provide an outside target for unpleasant decisions. Thatcher like Reagan could not really bring the economy to global standards. But parallels with the American situation do not hold good as the US economy has far greater stre and depth and the dollar is still a reserve currency.

Much of the haste over Maastricht was to bind German giant into the European framework. The Fre Germans and most other Europeans still hold to thi the first priority. Hence it is possible for them to ac changes in the implementation of Maastricht, but not i overall structure. They would probably prefer to a doubters to withdraw. Faced with this choice the C munity will probably remain together.

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THERE are Americans who once strongly support United States of Europe. Many of them now h doubts as they suspect that a strong and effec Europe would not provide their policies with the a matic support it has done for the last 50 years. But in multipolar world with global independence whic inevitable, a strong pole in Europe is in America's inte as it is in that of everyone else. Also Europe must ha sustainable and coherent world view of its own.

Only an incurable optimist would say that Maastr will go forward unchanged. Changes providing decentralisation, accountability and consultation will h to be made in the substance if not in the form. Parad cally, the need to find European answers for Europ problems will also have to accepted. The European I liament will have to be given a greater role. Brussels have to be cut down to size, become more efficient responsive. National Governments and Parliaments n debate European questions more responsibly. Enla ment may have to be put on hold. A confederal rather t a federal structure would seem more appropriate as current objective.

The slowing down in its construction may be fortu for India in giving us more time to prepare ourselve engage with the new Europe. But the engagement sho not be limited to trade and finance. Both India and Eur have learnt much about governance in the last half cent Sharing experience could prove of value. Our knowle of dealing with political pressure successfully in pl and diverse society is vast and varied. Linguistic Sta development councils, Articles 370 and 371 of the C stitution and many other devices have emerged fr our efforts to solve our problems which the Europe might do well to study. The problems of decentrali tion and excessive political interference with the bes intentions are issues with which both are grappling. we seek to enhance the bilateral relationship we co also gain by learning from each other.

(Courtesy: *The Hindustan Ti*

ABHIJIT SEN : Economy

(Continued from page 2)

comparisons are those which take into account a larger number of months. For example, the April-August average for this year, corrected for the bias due to the provisional figures in July and August, gives a 12.4 per cent inflation rate for the wholesale price index when compared to the corresponding period last year. This is somewhat less than last year. And an even lower annualised rate of inflation, of about 10 per cent, is obtained when inflation is measured month-by-month, with or without seasonal correction, for the period September 1991 to August 1992, avoiding the peak due to the devaluation. However, these rates of inflation, although less than the corresponding rates last year, indicate that inflation as measured by the wholesale price index was continuing at near-double-digit levels in August this year, and that there had been no significant deceleration in the inflation rate once the hump caused by last year's devaluation had been crossed.

Thirdly, measurement of inflation with reference to the wholesale price index can be quite misleading as an indicator of the prices that consumers pay. A better measure of the latter are the consumer price indices, and these indicate a much higher current rate of inflation than the wholesale price index. For example, annual inflation till July this year as measured point-to-point by the consumer price indices for industrial workers and agricultural labourers stood at 13 per cent and 21 per cent respectively compared to 11 per cent as measured by the wholesale price index for the same period. In other words, even ignoring the much higher rate of inflation facing agricultural workers, inflation at the end of August was running at somewhere between 9.5 per cent 13 per cent which, though less than at this time last year, is a far cry from the official claim of less than eight per cent. And again, taken in conjunction with the fact that the trade deficit has more than tripled over last year's, thus adding considerably to supplies through foreign borrowing, the performance on this front is hardly creditable.

Nonetheless, the government is not only indulging in self-congratulation and touting these "achievements" with the help of a pliant press. It has also grasped the opportunity provided by the fact that things were particularly bad at this time last year, for reasons for which it itself was responsible, to paint a picture of some improvement in order to dish out further doses of the dubious medicine that it has accepted under IMF-World Bank tutelage but which clearly has not worked so far. The latest of these is the massive increase in the prices of petroleum products for the third time in two years, during which period world petroleum prices have actually been coming down.

The reason for the present price hike is attributable directly to the IMF target of reducing the fiscal deficit to five per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) this year, and to its insistence that this target has to be met while restoring the balance in the Oil Coordination Committee Fund into which the government has dipped to meet the fiscal deficit target last year. Moreover, the devaluation and subsequent adoption of partial convertibility of the rupee had pushed up costs for the domestic oil sector and depressed its profitability which required to be restored as the government is keen to attract foreign investment in this sector.

It is to be noted that the cuts in the fiscal deficit so far have not had the desired effects of either reducing the trade deficit or bringing down inflation adequately, and that the manner in which this deficit is being sought to be cut continues to involve inflationary hikes in administered prices and cutbacks in necessary investment rather than any reduction in wasteful government administrative expenditure or more effective direct taxation of the rich. Moreover, the exchange rate policy so far has little to show in terms of reducing the trade balance, and despite the many concessions, foreign direct investment continues to be shy.

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SO what will be the direct inflationary outcome of the present hike in petroleum product prices? These products collectively account for 8.7 per cent of the wholesale price index, and the 18 per cent increase announced in the prices of these products would therefore have an immediate impact of increasing the wholesale price index by 1.2 per cent. However, this is just the first-round effect, and experience with past oil price hikes suggests that the final effect through cascading transport and production costs is much higher. The available econometric evidence suggests that the most likely outcome, taking these indirect effects into account, will be an additional rise of two per cent to 2.5 per cent in the wholesale price index within a month and a further rise of between one per cent and 1.5 per cent within the next six months. As a result, inflation as measured by the wholesale price index is likely to cross the double-digit level by October, despite the seasonal downswing and the better-than-expected monsoon. And, given that inflation before the hike was already running at a minimum of 9.5 per cent it is now possible that the current fiscal year may end with an inflation rate not significantly lower than last year.

In fact, things might turn out to be even worse because of the government's other policy initiatives and because of the fact that the trade deficit is increasing. The failure on the export front is clearly making the government rather desperate about sources of foreign exchange inflows, as is evident by its ill-conceived decision to open up Indian stock markets to foreign portfolio investment with no lock-in period and without any real control over repatriation of capital gains. This is much more liberal than the existing policies in most of the successful Asian economies other than Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan, and may, of course, lead to some initial inflow of funds. But any such inflow is likely to be very volatile and, in effect, the government has set in place a powerful capital flight instrument where not only will a crash in the stock market have adverse balance of payments (BoP) implications, but also bull runs in specific shares may be engineered to make quick profits which can now be used to convert rupee resources into foreign currency assets.

Because of these BoP effects, future Finance Ministers will have to be much more sensitive to the effect their budgets have on stock markets, even at the expense of the real economy, and yet, as the experience of this year shows, what seems a clever idea at Budget time can easily turn out to be disastrous subsequently. Moreover, there is much speculation now that the oil price hike, whose magnitude corresponds almost exactly to the current premium of the market exchange rate of the rupee over the official rate, may be a prelude to full convertibility of the rupee. If so, future BoP shortfalls would immediately be reflected in depreciations of the rupee, and, unlike so far, the inflationary impact of this will not be contained by insulating the domestic price of essential imports. The nation has so far avoided the devaluation-inflation-devaluation spiral that has wrecked Latin American economies. But the unimaginative policies being adopted since July 1991 have continuously been pointing towards this direction, and the announcements made last fortnight bring the nation even closer to this denouement. ■

(Courtesy - Frontline)

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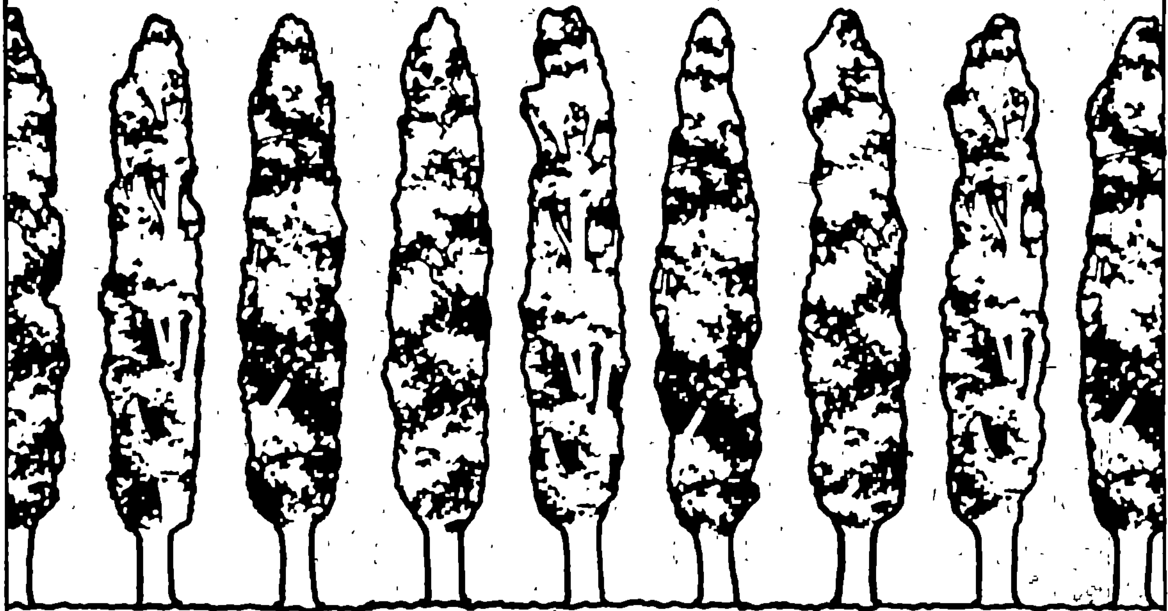

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Racism in Germany ● *Portrait of Entropy* ● *Crisis of Ideologies*

Mainstream

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POLITICAL NOTEBOOK

Factions and Big Money

At the time of writing these lines, there is excitement in the Capital about the imminence of reshuffle of the Union Cabinet. This is of course a source of hypertension for many of the Ministers as to whether they would be divested of their present portfolios and downgraded with the charge of less important ones. There are others who have been getting restless waiting to be called to join the Council of Ministers. While there are indications that this time the Prime Minister is likely to go in for a major reshuffle, there is also a touch of uncertainty about it because Narasimha Rao has conceived so many times in the past few months without actually going through the operation.

The government at the Centre is no doubt a subject of interest and concern for the entire country. At the same time one can hardly shut ones eyes to the happenings in the States particularly in those run by the Congress party because this is the ruling party at the Centre as well. The manner of handling the affairs at the State level perhaps provides a clearer insight into the current state of political functioning in the country as a whole. It is therefore relevant to direct the spotlight on the two southern States of Andhra and Karnataka where turbulence has been very much evident in recent months.

Will the new Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh last? And will there be no change of guards at Hyderabad till the next general election?

These are questions which may not be fair to Vijaya Bhaskara Reddy but legitimate in the light of the fury of factional tussles within the Andhra Pradesh Congress that preceded the ouster of the previous Chief Minister. For two long months, the inner-party battle rocked the Congress and virtually debilitated the functioning of the ministry headed by Janardhana Reddy. And this sordid squabbling would have continued for many more weeks, if not months, had the Andhra High Court on its part resorted to the proverbially protracted proceedings in the private medical college scandal case which brought judicial censure upon the Chief Minister.

In other words, an ugly tussle within the ruling Congress could not be settled by the party's high command despite the despatch of party observers in relays from Delhi who could hardly pacify the open brawl among the Congress MLAs. Equally ominous is the fact that even after the ouster of Janardhana Reddy, the contending factions could not on their own choose his successor, as they reached a checkmate situation, leaving it to the party President to nominate the new leader of the party in the legislature, that is, the new Chief Minister.

Few can disagree with Narasimha Rao's choice, as Vijaya Bhaskara Reddy

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is by far the most deserving individual for the post, among all the contenders. However, personal competence, experience or esteem count little when factions within the Congress party fight like the Chinese warlords, a tradition which has persisted within the Andhra Congress throughout the decades since independence — and the Prime Minister himself can bear this out from his direct personal experience. With all the back-up from the party President, however, the new Chief Minister will have to reckon with the disgruntled within his own party. Will they be reconciled to be left out of the plums of office for long? Even Vijaya Bhaskara's astrologer cannot guarantee that.

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AT the same time, it would be wrong and iniquitous to single out the Andhra Congress party for this malady of inner-party bickerings. Witness the dog-fight that has been going on in the next door Karnataka. For more than three months now, the Karnataka administration — at one time, one of the most efficient in the entire country — has been in a state of paralysis because of the civil war going on among the Ministers. Bangarappa has broken all record of cliff-hanging with all his adversaries left dumb-founded at his capacity of being a limpet Chief Minister. Deputation after deputation from the rebel Congress legislators have come to Delhi to plead with the party big-wigs, including the President, for the removal of Bangarappa but somehow he has managed so long to survive, tiring out all those expecting his removal, with Veerappa Moiley in the lead.

Dissidence on questions of policy has always had a place in the Congress. Group politics in some form or other was inevitable in a large sprawling organisation like the Congress in the best of times. But in the last two decades these have become hardened into factions each more pronounced and palpable since the days of Indira Gandhi's leadership, though ironically she split the Congress to set up a new party of principles and commitments — both of which are conspicuously absent in the Congress today.

In reality, the great split in the Congress in 1969 accelerated the entry of Big Money into Congress politics with the top leaders unashamedly establishing direct links with magnum-size money bags. All the inhibitions were dropped in the name of collecting party funds. And as the party with the preponderant impact on the politics of this country, even though it has lost its monopoly of power, the Congress has set the fashion which other parties, by and large have taken up consciously or otherwise, with the result that corruption has virtually ceased to be a dirty word in party politics today — so long as it is not caught.

This is borne out in the politics of Andhra and Karnataka today. That was why nobody could actually dislodge Janardhana Reddy nor could he be accused of not having indulged in corruption in that scandal which brought the Court strictures upon him. Bangarappa, on his part, has never made the unreal claim that his regime can flaunt its chastity on this score. Rather his political opponents hold that it is on the strength of the accumulated resources at his command he has so long been able to hold on to Chief Ministership.

Over the years, corruption of political life has assumed a mega size. In the years immediately following independence, a State-level politico, whether he is a Chief Minister, a Minister or a powerful party leader, would have normally been the target for bribing by a contractor or a provincial-level businessman. All this has changed. Today not only Big Business invades the precincts of Pradesh politics, but even international links are being established at that level : witness the procession of Chief Ministers nowadays going abroad ostensibly in search of the hard-currency investors, and incidentally to replenish their own coffers.

As for those installed in power at the Centre, new pastures opened up through kickbacks in purchases of defence equipments and for heavy industries. Collecting for the party fund became secondary to augmenting personal accumulations by individual leaders. Corruption, direct or covert, is thus eating into the very vitals of political functioning. The experience of the last two months in these two important States confirms this in a brazen form. This comes in the way of the democratic functioning of the parties themselves.

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ONE has, of course, to acknowledge that after taking over as the party President, Narasimha Rao tried hard to restore the practice of inner-party elections. But the virtual embargo on such elections within the party for twentyfive long years, imposed first by Indira Gandhi and then by her son, Rajiv, made the large body of Congressmen inert to the idea of elections within the party. After two decades of unrelieved resorting to appointment from the above, it is but natural that the Congressmen at many places should find it difficult to go back to the principle of election from below.

If democratic functioning of political parties is being thwarted by the vicious inroad of Big Money, its converse is equally true. If political leadership in a determined manner enforces democratic functioning within their respective party organisations, that too in its turn can help to thwart the pernicious encroachment of corruption in public life. The malady of "son-stroke" which has been spreading fast in recent times in the leadership of political parties is a conduit for corruption vitiating public life and also forging the unholy link between black money and the politician. Enforcing democratic functioning within the Congress is thus integrally linked with the task of cleansing political life from pollution by moneybags.

Perhaps too tall an order for any leader on the political stage today. Will Narasimha Rao take at least the first step towards chasing away this behemoth of corruption from our public life?

October 14 *N.C.*

GERMANY TODAY

Reunification to Racism

JAYSHREE SENGUPTA

Most parts of Berlin's wall have long since gone or made into souvenirs and today East Berlin is as easily accessible as any part of the West even though the relics from the past do survive in the form of Check Point Charlie and its infamous warning sign.

East Berlin is becoming integrated into the rest of Germany with designer shops and cafes but it till reeks of greyness and past controls. It will take a long time for it to have gleaming promenades like the famous Kurfurstendamm in West Berlin. To the many Indians living in Berlin today the eastern part is dangerous after dark even though the Indian consulate is located there.

Germany's rising racism is going to affect Indians not only in Berlin but in other towns of Germany. The neo-Nazis are attacking foreigners daily and they do not distinguish between Indians, Arabs or Africans. Many Indians have married Germans and have long settled in Germany but for the first time they are seeing visions of dangerous times ahead. Everyone blames this rising racism on the reunification of the two Germanys. Because it is only since the reunification that these racial attacks have started and the German Government is at a loss as to what should be done.

The government is also faced with the enormous cost of reconstruction of the entire eastern part. It is not only rebuilding roads and bridges but modernising factories and shopping centres and is even repairing monuments damaged by the World War II in Dresden. It is a colossal task. The displaced East Germans are not able to find jobs. Even otherwise their wages are considerably lower than that of their West German brethren.

Many young people living in dreary industrial East German towns are without recreational facilities. Not only are the unemployed youth bored but they are seeing the contrast for themselves between the two Germanys and this is one of the reasons why the level of frustration is rising. Otherwise they have become indistinguishable from the other young people in Western Europe, imbibing rapidly the pop culture and catching up with what they missed out on all these years.

Many homes in East Germany are often full of strife because the parents have no jobs. As some East German young people put it "father and mother stay at home and quarrel so we go out to the streets." They see foreigners being fed and clothed by the state in refugee hostels and their anger is aroused. To the unemployed Germans, the foreigners are seen as parasites, sucking away state money which could be used for the welfare of the local people. So they go and throw fire bombs at the hostels and want the foreigners out of Germany.

They are seeing too many foreigners around in the last few months because the German laws are liberal and allow anyone seeking asylum to come into Germany. These refugees can live comfortably till their cases are decided. It takes months and even years for cases to be decided and refugees often make money working illegally in the meantime.

There are about half a million asylum seekers this year. As the number of asylum seekers is growing, the resentment is spreading from one town to another. The neo-Nazis have played on this sentiment of "out with the foreigners" which was an ominous ring to it. Hitler too started this way. But the young East Germans who have grown up under state regulation and control which guaranteed jobs and careers are not able to adjust to the competition and hard work required in the new system. Yet they know that capitalism is the path to prosperity and affluence. They hate the Leftists and their communist past and are trying to cleanse Germany of Leftists, drugs and pornography and of course foreigners.

But this problem is not unique only to Germany. All over Europe the racist elements can be seen playing an important role in politics. In the past, with increased affluence, Europeans made use of immigrant labour to do all the dirty and menial jobs as in West Germany, France and Belgium. But now strangely enough as these countries are in the grip of recession, they are becoming less tolerant and are not liking the smells and the sights of immigrant colonies that have come up in cities like Paris, Berlin or Brussels. Even in Britain the problem is the same though the British policy is more tolerant and anyway by now the Indians in Britain are a force to be reckoned with in terms of numbers, professional skills and very importantly, wealth.

Germany, however, does not wish to be isolated in the struggle for power that is going on in Europe. Clearly, it is the biggest economic power and its Deutsche Mark is now the currency in which many people are storing their wealth rather than in the dollar, but Germany is not yet the leader. Germany is sensitive to all the criticisms that are being levelled against its race riots and its high interest rates which are causing havoc in the European currency market. It is constantly justifying high interest rates as a defence against inflation.

After supporting the French Franc from devaluing, Germany is now wooing France to join hands in forming a core of European integration to which others willing and able, will attach themselves to. But there is no doubt that with its industrial capabilities, the power of Germany will soon be felt by all.

But to emerge as the leader it has to control the excessive expenditure which is being diverted for refurbishing dilapidated factories, retraining labour force and building infrastructure. It is not an easy task and it will take some years for the whole thing to be put together. In the economic front Germany will have to bring down the interest rates and cut expenditure and finance the reconstruction through increased taxes and borrowing. In the meantime it will have to handle the unruly young and control the revival of racism that sends a chill down the spine reminding one of the atrocities against the Jews and gypsies in the concentration camps.

The German Government has already started taking action on the gypsy front by signing an agreement with Romania to deport tens of thousands of gypsies back to their homeland. (Most European gypsies are said to have come originally from Rajasthan.) But what will it do the 15,000 Jews that have recently arrived from Eastern Europe? Toughening of the immigration laws is on the cards and a crackdown on the neo-Nazis is a must. ■

The author is a regular contributor to Indian Express, *sending this despatch from Brussels.*

Market Economy: India's Road to Ruin

JEREMY SEABROOK

Markets are a universal phenomenon. Every culture has its own version—the bazaar, the souk, the market-square. These words call up homely, familiar images of eager sellers and willing buyers coming together for the provision of daily necessities.

If these transactions remain local, and if everybody in the community has the resources to buy for his or her needs, there is no problem. What we are seeing now, however, is the development of something called a single 'global market', a worldwide division of labour into which every country must be integrated.

In this context, it is perhaps time to look a little more clearly at some of the disadvantages of this global market, and of the role of a country like India within it.

The great strength of market transaction is their immediacy: buyer and seller meet to strike a bargain. The seller will naturally seek to conceal any defect in the goods on offer, and the buyer will look for imperfections in order to get them more cheaply. But how different it all becomes when items manufactured in one part of the world are transported across continents to be sold in another part. How it is then to conceal the true costs of any commodity, to "externalise" the costs in the jargon of economics. Which unsuspecting purchaser in the West, buying a garment in some showy superstore, ever stops to think of the sweatshop in Asia where it was produced? Who imagines the pain and the tears of the exploited woman who made it? Whoever, in London or in New York, choosing some luxury fruit for desert, pauses to wonder whether the mangoes he or she buys were grown at the expense of local food production in India or Venezuela and who went hungry to supply this amenity? Within the global market everything can be hidden—the social injustice and the environmental damage. And indeed, it is the function of armies of advertisers to cleanse all products of the sweat and bloodshed in their manufacture, so that they appear in the market place as benign and desirable; rituals of purification.

The market economy is celebrated as the surest way of giving the people what they want. Indeed, the West regards 'what the people want' as sacred. But in this process of getting what they want, people are also compelled to accept many things they do not want. The rich societies of the West certainly deliver the economic goods, but they also deliver some fearful social evils: rising levels of violence, breakdown of families, addictions, the abuse of children, neglect of the elderly, loneliness and social isolation—these are just some of the consequences of extreme competitiveness and individualism that make people see each other as rivals for all the commodities and goods that jostle for attention in the busy shopping malls of the West.

This article by the British author and journalist is reproduced from The Pioneer *(October 7, 1992).*

For instance, everyone in the United States deplores the present levels of crime—28 million recorded crimes last year, including more than 25,000 murders. Yet nobody knows what to do about it. People feel powerless. They feel they have no influence upon the moral shape of the society that shelters them. This impotence is just part of the hidden cost, the unseen price we pay for the deep penetration of our lives by market values which supplant human ones.

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THE market can never deliver social justice. To the contrary, it worsens and institutionalises inequalities. It concentrates power and privilege where these already exist. The market creates a dominant culture of the cash economy, and then withholds from large numbers of people the cash they need to participate in it. This is why poverty and violence remain in even the richest countries in the world. It is inconceivable that India, where wealth is so ill-distributed, could in any way be emancipated by the free markets. Markets may be free, but the people remain captive.

There are further ill-effects of an unchecked market economy. As it expands and grows, it invades areas of human activity where it has no place. For instance, in the busy buy-in culture of the West, millions of desperate people are paying large sums of money to experts in order to be told how to lead their own lives. They write to newspapers, appeal to radio and TV chatshows, pay counsellors, therapists and advisers to learn how to make themselves more desirable, more successful, to find out what has gone wrong with their relationships, their marriages, why they have been abandoned or deserted, neglected or abused. People buy in friendship, care, tenderness, sex, consolation—all the precious free gifts of humanity now come within the tightening embrace of the market economy, which can do nothing to assuage the value-added unhappiness it has itself produced.

It is perhaps the invasive power of the market that leads to the greatest excesses. For, in the end it undermines our own capacities to do, create, and make things for ourselves and each other, to give and to provide, outside of the cash economy. It penetrates the heart, the spirit and the imagination of human beings in the supreme interest of selling us something more. And as it does so, it makes us more and more dependent upon processes that use up increasing quantities of the earth's resources. If it had been the purpose of humanity to lay waste the world, no better instrument than the

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Hazards of Begmanship

R.K. ROY

The fate of the Finance Minister's plea, made during his latest visit to Washington, for fresh IMF assistance of a whacking nine billion dollars is less certain than has been made out by inspired media hype. Funds will be coming in driblets, and though these might add up to a tidy sum, it is simplistic to conclude that the IMF endorses such strategy as the government has been able to cobble up in support of its mega request

Meeting India's extraordinarily large external debt servicing dues, in foreign exchange, with new debt is a strategy for disaster. The debt servicing liability burgeons every passing year. It is hardly surprising then that Dr Manmohan Singh invited what was no less than a reprimand when he went to the IMF with the largest conceivable Indian hat in hand. Michel Camdessus, Managing Director of the IMF, could not have ticked off the Finance Minister more politely than when he told a press conference to "imagine what it would be not only for India but for the world at large to have a tigerisation of India."

This is the IMF speak for : the government must have a viable strategy to tackle the country's external debt; it cannot rely for long on the IMF and the rest of the world to help it live with crisis; the economic growth rate must be boosted through tigerisation; for this , the Government must persist with 'reform' so that capitalism, foreign and domestic (in that order), becomes the engine of India's growth.

Tigerisation means achieving an annual growth of well over seven per cent a year, as has been done by the Republic of Korea and China. It is of course better to increase the production of goods and services at the enviable rates of the tigers than at 5.6 per cent prescribed by our Eighth Plan. But the case for tigerisation does not stem from the preference for affluence. Without a higher growth rate than planned, the consumption level within the country will plummet. Since the consequent burden is bound to fall disproportionately heavily on the vulnerable poor, the socio-political fall-out will be unmanageable.

India's growth rate is projected to be no more than 3.5 per cent in the first year of the Eighth Plan. Even so, assume that the targeted average GDP growth will be achieved somehow in the Plan period. Debt servicing, in foreign exchange, will require the additional export of goods and services equivalent to 1.8 per cent of GDP. (The country will of course have to keep down the excess of imports over exports to 1.4 per cent of GDP, that is, the level that can be covered by tight-fisted foreign aid.)

Therfore, goods and services available for domestic consumption will grow at 3.8 per cent(5.6 minus 1.8) per year. But we have also to reckon with the requirements of the expanding population – growing at 2.1 per cent a year. This means, net per capita annual consumption growth (3.8 minus 2.1) will be 1.7 per cent , or almost half that of the Seventh Plan period when the country serviced outstanding debt with new debt and not from its own resources.

The fearful prospect is being currently averted with borrowings, mainly from the IMF. By thus pushing up debt servicing with mega borrowings, the ground is being laid for depressing per capita consumption growth in the not too distant future. Debt can only be repaid out of income. Without a rapid rise in income, consumption cannot but come in for a sharp squeeze. The urgency for tigerisation thus arises from the need to maintain per capita consumption growth as near the Seventh Plan level as possible, and not for taking off into the fanciful consumerist orbit of STAR-TV.

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TIGERISATION requires far larger investment than 23 per cent of GDP achieved in the Seventh Plan and proposed in the Eighth. However, investment must be financed largely with domestic saving, which, as a proportion of GDP, was less than 21 per cent in the Seventh Plan and is slated to rise to not even 22 per cent in the Eighth. (The excess of investment over domestic savings is met by foreign aid and commercial borrowings; the latter, available in the Seventh Plan, is no longer forthcoming.)

India's saving rate is less than two-thirds of the tigers. Tigerisation of India will then have to be achieved with foreign savings, that is , foreign investment. The estimated investment for achieving a growth rate of seven per cent in support of semi-tigerisation, not tigerisation, is equivalent to 28 per cent of the country's GDP (on the basis of the improved relationship of output to investment projected in the Eighth Plan). This is the growth rate required to protect consumption and provide for debt servicing.

Foreign investment required to bridge the savings gap of six per cent of GDP works out to Rs 36000 crores or close to a mind-boggling 13 billion dollars a year. Conceivably, if only a half the required investment inflow materialises, the domestic economy will respond thanks to the inspiration provided by Harshad Mehta with a matching rise in savings. This argument ignores

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Pakistan : Contemporary Dilemmas

I.K.GUJRAL

The *Lahorias*, as the residents of Lahore are commonly called, always had a penchant for wit and succinctly telling the juicy part of politics. Neither the partition nor General Zia's lashes have dimmed this zest. During a recent visit to this city of my nostalgia, I met one of my university days friend and a reputed scribe – Abdullah Malik. While discussing the contemporary political scene that looked bleak to him, he said "... if the army were to decide and stage a comeback today, the people of Punjab at least would come out in the streets with flowers to welcome them."

Coming from Malik, with his Leftist background and memories of harsh treatment meted out to him during all military regimes, was indeed surprising. I checked this with several other persons of merit and knowledge. Most of them believed that the popularity rating of Nawaz Sharif had gone very low, but it had not yet touched that desperate mark. For an outsider, it was very surprising since Nawaz Sharif, a son of the soil, had done so much to improve the well-being of the city. Lahore today looks impressively clean, green and tidy. But every assessment of his more than a year's rule highlighted the dark spots more.

Never since the landslide victory of the late Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto had anyone secured a better electoral mandate than him. But saying this would not mean much since only thrice in the history of the country have the people gone to the polls. On two occasions they voted for the Bhuttos – father and daughter – and the third time the mantle of power fell on a Punjabi.

By all accounts, Nawaz Sharif's charisma has vanished speedily. Nobody, not even his devout supporters, endorse that last year's elections were either fair or free. The powerful *troika* – President, the Army Chief and the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) – were determined to keep Ms Bhutto out and instal their chosen favourite Nawaz Sharif. For this they had no qualms. Ms Bhutto's own inaptitudes facilitated their task. A more apt politician would not have let her own alliances crumble so easily. For a while Sharif thrived on persecuting her, but such pursuits never last long.

In the meantime, a series of financial and other scandals caught up. What is known as the "Cooperative Scandal" had adversely affected fates and fortunes of nearly 700,000 small depositors in towns and villages of the country. It is widely believed that the Cooperative Banks scam involving a staggering figure of Rs 9.73 billion, had a lot to do with the misdoings of some political heavyweights and their underlings. Kismat of many others was doomed with the bankruptcy of the infamous BCCI that was accused of laundering drug earnings of some highly placed persons. Enquiries in these scams have been ordered but they hardly carry any credibility.

The story of the BCCI – in the context of Pakistan – is very murky. Although it had originated in the Gulf, Pakistanis always took pride in owning it. General Zia's son was its top executive, while many other high and mighty ones in the polity were its patrons and beneficiaries. Millions of dollars are believed to have been siphoned to the Afghan *mujahideens* as well.

While an erudite Commerce Minister of Nawaz Sharif was very enthusiastic in projecting privatisation spree as a success story, Ms Benazir Bhutto had, with a touch of drama, said that "while one brother was selling, the other was buying". The Sharif family is a leading industrial house. Any number of scandals charge them of profiting from the "deregulating of the economy". So much of muck is talked about some leading families in political circuit that accusations against Asif Ali Zardari, Benazir Bhutto's husband, looked puny by comparison.

A close associate of the President has been accused of grave misdoing in Sind. Ms Veena Hayat's molestation scandal had shaken conscience of the whole Pakistani society. Even a brief stay in Pakistan filled one with such innumerable stories of kickbacks that our own Bofors and the submarine slanders looked under-sized. Stories about misdoings of what Benazir has called the "Gang of Four" have contributed a great deal in dipping the image of the Nawaz Sharif regime.

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ALTHOUGH affluence of the upper crust of society is staggering, the economic situation of the country continues to be critical. The mounting defence expenditure, on the one hand, and stoppage of the American aid, on the other, have added to its woes. Following the IMF prescription, several steps have been taken to bail out the economy but the end of the tunnel is still out of sight. It may not be peculiar to Pakistan.

The author is a former Minister of External Affairs, in the National Front government.

Almost every Third World country that does not enjoy nature's oil bounty is confronted with similar dilemmas. The stranglehold of mounting debt is getting tighter. Pakistan's external debts are presently estimated at about 15 billion dollars.

"The dominant reality in Pakistan today", says I.A. Rehman, a highly respected journalist,"is the difficulty being faced in completing the transition from the authoritarian system of General Ziaul Haq to normal democratic dispensation...." This is true!

But for the intervention of the Chief of Army Staff General Aslam Beg,in the post-Zia era, another bout of martial law would have captivated the country's polity. Now it is commonly believed that Zia's dictatorial regime not only subverted the 1973 Constitution, it also proved to be "more disastrous for the country than all earlier military regimes, it left on every sphere of Pakistani life deep scars of ruthless repressive rule...." says Prof Kalim Bahadur in his merited assessment of the post-Zia period.

A Bangladeshi scholar, Dr Raunaque Jahan, interpreted the in-built tensions of Pakistan as " failure of national integration". At one stage it scared away Bangladesh and in its contemporary era it was alienating Sind and Baluchistan. But the ruling elite pays scant attention to it. The Punjabi caucus has benefited so much from power centralisation that any idea of devolution of authority or making the polity federal is abhorrent to it. Even within the limited provincial autonomy, it is the big feudal lords and the Pirs who reign, but it is the Punjabi-dominated military-cum-bureaucracy caucus that really rules.

It would be idle to expect that such coalitions would ever let any democratic institution, particularly at the grassroot levels, thrive. As a background it may be recalled that in the past such coalitions had insulated most of this region from the anti-imperialist upsurge. Sind had its *kisan* movement led by the legendary G.M. Saeed. He continues to feel suffocated in the contemporary environment.

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THE NWFP, despite its tribal society, got inducted into the Gandhian movement and that explains their high level of politico-democratic urges. Entry of the three-fourth million Afghans has gravely upset their inner cohesion and economic prospects. The Baluchis never deserted tribal loyalties and their spirit of independence. Pakistan could never assimilate them despite harsh army punishments. The Baluchis, it may be remembered, are living in large numbers in Iran and Afghanistan too. Their tribal relationships transcend national boundaries and that adversely affects the nation-state's cohesion. The Zia programme of Islamisation had a sectarian overtone too. It outcasted the Ahmadis and stoked the Shia-Sunni animosities.

Benazir Bhutto was riding a wave of high popularity when she returned from exile in 1986. The Muslim League regime led by Junejo that had been installed in power on the basis of a party-less poll, was shaken. For a while it looked that even an uncanny Zia may not survive. But she neither projected a cogent platform nor was she skilful enough to put together her disarrayed party. As a legatee of her father she relied more on slogans, but unlike him her grasp of the power machinations was unsure.

Some powerful elements in Washington liked her but the Pentagon's foremost priority was the Soviet presence in Afghanistan. It could not disturb the *troika* that was so efficient and cooperative. The American support, on which she had relied so much, was perfunctory. Her tilt towards the USA alienated her from youthful "progressives"in her own ranks, weakening the nerve centre of her party. When the elections came, she chose to delete the young and enthusiastic cadre that had suffered so much at Zia's hand and was committed to her professed ideals, in favour of the feudals who, in turn, jettisoned her.

The story of Benazir's brief ascendance to power may remind one of Joan of Arc minus faith in her own ideological moorings. She used all her rhetorical histrionics to capture the platform of her political rivals. But neither her talk of a "thousand years of war" with India. nor the "*goli chalao, goli chalao*" (shoot, shoot) for "Azadi" for the Kashmir, secured a place for her in the power circuit, nor did she get back her lost constituency. By the time President Ishaq delivered his fatal blow, much of her lustre had been lost. A well-planned disinformation campaign of her adversaries played havoc with her reputation.

With her dismissal, the *troika* plus Ambassador Oaklay of the USA rode back to total authority. The Kashmir front was heated further, and with "victory" in Afghanistan well in sight, they had reasons to be jubilant.

Unceremonious withdrawal of the Soviets from Afghanistan has generated new dilemmas for Pakistani foreign policy. The transfer of power in Kabul has neither been peaceful nor placid. As a matter of fact the ethnic conflicts in that country has every possibility of flowing over to Pakistan as well. The ISI has staked a lot on Pushtoon-speaking Hekmatyar, but the ongoing civil war has spilt the entire country on ethnic-cum-religious lines. It presents grave dilemmas for the policy-makers.

With a great deal of gloating, and as if to mock me, some leading Ministers in Pakistan told me of Pakistan's " great achievements" in Central Asia. Many ministerial delegations had travelled to the capitals of the new republics and signed some bilateral and multilateral agreements for trade, etc. On some occasions, they had also tried to mobilise them over the Kashmir issue. All this had a touch of superficiality and did not manifest a mature understanding of the Central Asian complexities and their urgent economic needs. Pakistan, or for that matter, the entire South Asia, has neither surplus resources nor enough energy to bail them out of contemporary crises.

In the entire region there is a sudden explosion of unfamiliar ideas, alliances and conflicts. Almost every new state is embroiled in a shooting war with its neighbour, or is busy putting down secessionist eruptions. The idea of a Pan-Turkish bloc threatens territorial integrity of many countries ranging from the Arab states to China.

Violent conflicts between nationalisms, ethnic loyalties and religious faiths are already taking a heavy toll. Wars are being fought between Armenia and Azerbaijan and also within Georgia. The situation in Tajikstan is fluid and unstable, while several units of the Russian Federation are up in revolt.

Overriding all these are destabilising dynamics of fundamentalism and sectarianism. While an overwhelming majority of the Central Asian people are ethnically Turkic, they are sharply divided as Sunnis, Shias, and Sufis (Sufi-ism we might recall, had originated in this region). Then there is a vast support for " Jadidism" or reformism.

An obessive upsurge of fundamentalism has created additional dificulties for the Pakistani polity. Despite the high profiles of Jamait-i-Islami and its cohorts, the elite of Pakistan has never been taken in. This explains why the "Islam-*pasand*" parties never got more than six to seven per cent of votes in any poll. Senator Prof Khurshid Ahmad is a very articulate leader of the Jamait. He candidly told us that the Pakistani concept of nation-state was very different from that of the "secularists", and it was an icon that Pakistanis did not worship. "To us," he said, "Umma is the basic concept that melts national boundaries...." Both he and President Ishaq were talking of "incomplete process of partition".

This concept may be of concern to us but, at the same time, it means that Pakistan is one country whose borders remain undefined. Neither the Soviet Union (nor its successive states), nor any regime in Kabul has ever accepted the validity of the Durand line that was arbitrarily drawn by the British. This has been a bone of contention for all Pushtoons. The legendary Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan epitomised this feeling by instructing that his remains after death be interred in a grave in Jalalabad.

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FOR whatever reasons, and in the space of this article it may not be possible to examine them in details, Pakistani polity has never been able to emerge out of the shadow of army generals. This has frustrated many. As Air Chief Marshal (Retd.) Asghar Khan puts it: "They (the people) believed that in this new state they had helped create, they would receive social and economic justice; they believed that they would be they would be equal before the law, that they would be free to criticise their rulers and would be able to replace them when they so desired. They never believed for a moment that in this new state, the exploitation of the poor by the privileged would continue and they never thought that within a relatively short time, a coterie of generals would begin to wield political power. Pakistan was the result of a democratic and constitutional struggle. It was not created or conquered as the result of a military campaign. Nor was any general its architect".

But this mass frustration and disillusionment has not been able to assert itself. Most of the time the army has ruled either directly or by proxy. But why? As Prof Mohd. Waseem of Pakistan puts it: "In Pakistan the nationalist party was unable to organise itself as an agent of political mobilisation and critically depended on traditional elite for support at the local level. For example, the Muslim League drew upon the support of landord Pirs for mobilising their religious followers in favour of Pakistan."

And, "Under these circumstances, party was not much of an intruder in district politics which continued to be patterned after the previously operative patron-client relations with relative impunity. It was natural that a party which failed to get control over the purse and policy from the bureaucracy at the federal level lost credibility at the local level as an alternative patron of the elite. The bureaucracy which initially fought for maintaining its powers and privileges finally made a common cause with the military with whom it shared a perspective based on suspicion of all public activity..." and the " party was distrusted as a mere destablising factor in the locality and a rival policy-bearing institution at the highest levels. The electoral mode of politics which defined the role of parties and Parliament itself became the greatest casualty in this context."

The two recently held elections should have changed the political scenario and social psyche, but it was not to be seen. "What the military rule does is to undermine the power potential of parties and Parliament by rendering them non-functional. While the constitutional component of the colonial tradition is taken out of politics, the more virulent tradition of bureaucratic rule gains momentum and causes general discrediting of politicians as brokers between the local community and the state. When the military withdraws from politics, the capacity of a post-military civilian regime to manage conflict in the country is seriously circumscribed. Having once struck, the military continues to cast its shadows over the way pollitics is organised in the country."

In the midst of this uncertain and cruel process of transformation, the anti-Indian syndrome continues to be at the top of the nation's agenda. Whether it is Kashmir or the nuclear arms, or the arms acquisition, these postures sustain the stranglehold of military junta. ■

Paradigm of Entropy State

V.N. NARAYANAN

When Aid is worse than AIDS

Rajiv Gandhi had more than once declared that 85 per cent of all government outlays do not reach the intended beneficiaries. His whiz kid Sam itroda provided a clue to where the funds went: the olitical brokers, bureaucracy and "edifice-making"

Last week Harshad Mehta told a newspaper repre-entative that 80 per cent of all trading in India was in iolation of rules. He ought to know.

The World Bank the other day said that India is the hird biggest debtor country in the world with a current lebt burden of $74 billion(at Rs 30 to a dollar, that vorks out to Rs 222,000 crore!) with a debt service urden of $20 billion. During the five years 1991-96 ndia's repayment liability is estimated to be $47.2 bil-ion and going by the country's incapacity to generate oreign earnings in a substantial manner and the ex-ected quantum of aid inflow, the foreign aid received n the coming years will be less than what the country ad to repay by way of principal and interest. In brief, ndia will be n the same position vis-a-vis aid-giving ations as the rural borrower in India was in the clutches f the moneylender. Aid is a self-perpetuating instru-nent of national insolvency and enslavement.

Interestingly enough, the World Bank has also evealed that India did not utilise aid to the tune of $20 illion! Either this country did not need the money it orrowed or it had no means to spend all the amount.

These four paragraphs have something in common-ogether adding up to what Hazel Henderson, a brilliant uturist-thinker calls the "Entropy state". Entropy is a neasure in physics of energy that exists but cannot be put o work. An entropy society, according to Henderson, is ne where "the transaction costs that are generated equal r exceed the society's productive capabilities". India is lready in that state, but I will come to it later. A set of ules follow from what has been stated above. These are:

Rule No.1: The government exists for itself, and for the government servants in that order and never for the people. So, mortgage the economy to get dollars in driblets and collect Rs1500 crore from the people of India by hiking gas and petrol prices today to pay ADA and bonus to the government staff tomorrow.

Rule No.2: The government's laws are for the law-abiding and not for the law-breakers. No need for illustrations there!

Rule No. 3: Foreign aid is strictly not for economic development. It is aimed solely at meeting the current account needs of the government and foreign travel needs of ministers and bureaucrats. Borrow not to increase your production capacity but to pay for your consumption requirements. When the latter is met, say you don't need the next tranche of the IMF loan, but keep asking for more.

Rule No.4: You need aid to subsidise the Australian and Canadian farmer but to get aid you must cut subsidies to the Punjab and UP farmer.

Consequently, Harshad Mehta is a product, not a malcontent, of the system; the security scam is a logical occurrence, not an aberration. Terrorism, separatism, communalism, corruption, etc, are manifestations, not offshoots, of the system. We must be thankful to the Harshad Mehtas, the Jharkhandis and even the militants of Punjab and Kashmir. They are the convex mirror images of ourselves. Instead of recognising the distorted images of ourselves, we see them as external afflictions to be snuffed out, vanquished or suppressed. If Amnesty International talks of human rights violations and torture of prisoners in India, we do not ask ourselves why such things happen, we question the bona-fides of Amnesty.

Over the past two decades we have both institutionally and psychologically destroyed all self-corrective mechanisms in society and government. That is why we need soft options like deficit financing at home and economic aid from abroad. Knowing full well that aid is an instrument of global economic imperialism, we seek it out at the cost of national self-reliance and even economic sovereignty. As J.K. Galbraith rightly points out, economic wisdom has largely become a factor of affluence."A country is qualified to extend economic and other advice in accordance with the size of its gross national product. The result is a very large flow of instruction – of counsel, warning and rebuke – from the rich countries to the poor." There are very few experts in the USA who would credit their government with good economic management and yet the USA is today dictating its economic thinking to every country in the world. The weapon is economic aid, which can be as deadly as AIDS at worst and at best as useless as Indian diplomatic missions all over the world.

In the classic Tamil version of the epic *Ramayan*, poet Kamban depicts the state of Ravana after the death of his valiant son and brother as "the agony of the debtor". Those were days when the ignominy of debt was as excruciating as defeat in war. In our own times, the Soviet Union, despite the drawbacks of the Communist regime, was a self-respecting economic entity in addition to being a military superpower. Today's Russia and even Deng's China are pathetic shadows looking for crumbs from the West and willing to be bullied to submission in the United Nations by the USA.

Look around the world. How many countries receiving US aid over the past half a century had moved from the

This contribution is from the Editor-in-chief of The Tribune, the well-known daily from Chandigarh, in which this contribution first appeared in two parts.

status of poor country to rich? None, if you omit the post-War Marshall-Plan beneficiaries. Go further, how many countries which were part of defence pacts of the West getting the most-favoured nation treatment have prospered to economic self-sufficiency ? None. The late Y.B.Chavan was profoundly specific. He said some kind of a curse was attached to countries which had military tie-ups with the US. Look at the Philippines, Pakistan, *etal.*

Aid is politics and not altruism. That being so, it will not serve the aims of the aid receiving country. The reason is simple. With the economic aid comes the economic philosophy of the donor country. Liberalise, privatise, cut subsidies, allow direct foreign investment, raise prices, lower currency value, cut down deficits and from there to stop nuclear projects, sign the non-proliferation treaty and yet further to observe human rights as we do.

All that has already happened. Now an indication of what we are in for. In the first four months of the current year India has paid by way of debt repayment and interest an amount which is Rs 425 crores more than what it has received as foreign aid. The foreign exchange balance sheet looks like this: Inflow $ 4.15 billion by October 1992. Outgo $ 5 billion by March 1994. That is, India must get a 20 per cent return on its aid in 18 months just to meet its debt liabilities. All our industrial production, export earnings and efficient economic performance (overdoses of wishful thinking!) would be sufficient only to meet the debt. What scope is there for development? It is the classic example of the race in *Alice in Wonderland*: "Here it takes all the running to remain in the same place. If you have to reach somewhere, you must run twice as fast."

The entropy cannot state do that. So more arm-twisting and more advice from the aid giver. No, don't take loan or aid. Allow us to enter your markets. Ten years ago, the World Bank told India to go in for commercial loans instead of asking for institutional aid. We did. The result is a 300 per cent increase in our debt. In the first 40 years of India's independence the country accumulated a foreign debt of Rs 40,000 crores in just four years, after that it doubled to Rs 80,000 crores. That is about to double in two years. Now comes the advice to allow direct investment. Economic colonialism is not a possibility but an imminence. The arch Robber Clive, as Marx called the founder of British rule in India, has a few lessons to learn from his descendants settled in the new world.

I have concentrated on rules 3 and 4 in the earlier part of this write-up to emphasise the fact that foreign aid is an essential concomitant in the economic enslavement of a nation and in speeding up the march towards the entropy state. Briefly. the government needs money to solve its problems. It taxes the citizens and prints notes to do it internally. To fatten itself it needs external aid. We have come to the end of economics, not of history.

II

Let them eat GNP

Until, the day the Harshad Mehta bubble burst, India's money and share markets were on Cloud Nine; everyone was talking about the vitality and vibrancy of the capital market and the resilience of the Indian economy. The illusion of societal prosperity was fostered by the Phantom prosperity of share-holders and mutual funds and the real prosperity of buccaneers and manipulators. It had to collapse to the simple reason that there was no accretion for real wealth in this phenomenon. The market boom, like inflation, is the manifestation of the massive "economic wheel-spinning" where money flows faster and larger, people work at feverish pace and the general level of life appears to be rising appreciably. The snag in all this will be that fewer and fewer products, goods and services will be resulting from this flurry of hyperactivity and money becomes less and less related to real value.

A horde of highly talented and productive people engaged in utterly unproductive activities—that is the typical entropy state. The colossal illusion of prosperity simultaneosly raises expectations giving rise to a bewildering array of unanticipated social costs. The human casualties of the entropy state—society's dropouts, the educated unemployed, the uneducated unemployable, the causeless terrorists, the aimless addicts and myriads of ordinary citizens who cannot deal with Big Brother bureaucracies—keep growing. So does the proportion of the national income to be spent in controlling crime, mediating conflicts, protecting citizens and the environment. New levels of expenditure are reached without any prospect of growth in productive capacity or income.

Costly and highly remunerative parasitism at one level and unrewarding hard labour at another—the two Indias of Sharad Joshi and Rajni Kothari. The one grows quite unmindful of the existence of the other, perhaps in the mistaken impression that economic growth as exemplified by the gross national product enriches all. In a different era, the aristocratic lady, when told that there was no bread for the people, was believed to have said:"Let them eat cake". The modern market economist and the World Bank expert of today says:"Let them eat GNP".

The campaign around the world about the demise of communism is as premature and misdirected as the current obsession in India with the seeming virtues of privatisation. What is really taking place is the merger of the government of business into the business of government-Harshad Mehta lecturing to the Finance Ministry on budget-making and the kins of politicians and bureaucrats recruited as executives in foreign banks and multinationals-for mutual benefit and at the cost of society. If the bank and securities scam has any lesson to impart, that was known to Thomas Jefferson almost 280 years ago. He warned, back in 1816, that "banking establishments are more dangerous than standing armies". How prescient! Today, the World Bank headquartered (forgive the horrendous verbalising) in Washington conducts war by other means and achieves ideological conquests for the USA.

In his thin and admirably provocative volume entitled *Building a New India*, Dr Subramaniam Swamy sets forth an eightpoint agenda for national renaissance. The most positive part of the book is the title and the recognition of the urgent need for such an agenda. It is not easy for thinking persons to agree with Dr Swamy on any issue but his call for an "alternative model" for the economy which would reject both communism and capitalism for the same reasons (they kill individual enterprise through the use of party and corporate bureaucracies) is certainly on target. It was no accident that the educated feudal-intellectual class of Indians under the British were the most vociferous advocates of the socialist economic model at the dawn of independence Communism and capitalism are not only "converging" ideologies, but also ones that lead inevitably to the entropy state. All along, there was an inevitability about India's slide-down – from being the 105th country in the ranking based on the GNP in 1955 to 161st in 1990 ; from the nineteenth big exporter in 1955 to fortyseventh now. Dr Manmohan Singh's liberalisation-privatisation miracles are as much doomed to degeneration as the mythical Nehruvian model of growth adopted in the fifties.

Dr Swamy's analysis cites a remarkable fact to emphasise the economic failure. It is given by Dr C. Gopalan, former Director- General of the Indian Council of Medical Research, who says that out of 23 million babies born every year in India, only three million – 13 per cent! – can expect to grow up into normal human beings."The other 20 million will either die in the first year (19 per cent) or be handicapped one way or another due to malnutrition or inadequate medical care to be substandard survivors who will perpetuate the undernutrition scenario over successive generations". Not only has India failed to control population – it grew by 161 million in the eighties to a figure of 844 million and will cross the one billion mark before the century is out – but it has failed to ensure a healthy population. The substandardisation of Indian people permeates all sections of society – politician, bureaucrat, intellectual, and labourer.

The West's emphasis on economic growth is questioned by wise men in the West and it is wholly inapplicable to India with its bewildering plurality of tongues, skills and faiths. The strategy should be directed towards a better re-allocation of resources and their efficient utilisation. What we need is not greater production of Marvel soaps, Uncle Chips, *et al.* – but regulated consumption of essentials of life. V.P. Singh's Mandalisation drive, now happily given up, sought to spread the icing of power on the government cake to a wider area of the population. This is what we must do to our existing resources, both human and material. Reduce the cost of economic growth and stem the tide of rising expectations; manage the economy, not manipulate

That is also the greatest argument against foreign aid – it deters the government from looking within. If money is available, there is no need for austerity or even efficiency and if you aren't austere, you can always borro and you will. Privatisation will marginalise the poor for ever by fixing the government's looks on the better – off fifteen per cent of the population. Since that itself is a huge number, about 150 million people, the look of prosperity would be substantial and deceptively national and real.

People ask: can we do without aid? We can. Every self- respecting nation can and must. Of course, it will be inconvenient if India is denied aid, but it will be a disaster if it gets the aid it is seeking. Where do we find the resources to meet our needs in the short run (In the long run, as Keynes told us, we all are dead)? From within, of course. We must undergo the discomfort of having to reduce our wants so that they can be met. For instance: close 60 per cent of the Indian embassies around the world. They do precious little for India's image abroad but cost the nation dearly. We can save up to $ 400 million in foreign exchange. Also, let us have smaller missions in unpretentious apartments, instead of the present sprawling complexes. The value of the Indian Embassy's real estate in Tokyo is estimated at over one billion! Why not sell most of it and take a small building on rent? Diplomacy, in these days of rapid transport and satellite communication, can be done at home and even be privatised to the great advantage of the nation.

Reduce the civil service by at least 50 per cent. You have double saving in that; you save on recurrent DA, bonus, etc., and corruption may drop by some percentage. Other than the political parties and the Indian Administrative Service, the most powerful and character-corrosive vested interest group in the country is the brotherhood of national misery called the government employees. Look at the havoc the engineering department staff wrought on the people of Chandigarh last week!

Abolish official cars for all but the highest level of bureaucrats and ministers and fix a ceiling on fuel consumption for official cars. Encourage officials to own personal cars and pay them a fixed conveyance allowance. Develop a fleet of deluxe public buses to transport employees of various economic tiers. Tax private corporations which provide company conveyance to their staff. Let us ration petrol and diesel rather than import and waste in luxury consumption using aid money or precious foreign exchange.

Close down the offices of DGTD and DGS & D which have become the cockpits of governmental corruption over the years. There are several areas of government which need the guillotine and not the scissors. The best quote to have come from the Reagan era which promised "less government" was his statement: "Government is the problem". (I am not forgetting the memorable remark by Reagan – "I forgot to duck, dear" – to his wife Nancy after he was shot at close range by a psychopathic assailant.) Yes, we need less government, but the government is the least qualified agency to lessen itself. Procrustean, the dimunitive Greek pirate chief who ordered that no citizen of his domain should be taller than him – were cut at the top as at the bottom to conform to specifications of uniform height – never applied the principle vis-a-vis those shorter than him. Socialism does advocate some Procrustean principles in the name of equity, but without success. Today the people of India must become Procrusteans and cut the government down to size. ■

We do not believe in a rigid autarchy, but we do want to make India self-sufficient in regard to her needs as far as this is possible. We want to develop international trade, importing articles which we cannot easily produce and exporting such articles as the rest of the world wants from us. We do not propose to submit to the economic imperialism of any other country or to impose our own on others. We believe that the nations of the world can co-operate together in building a world economy which is advantageous for all and in this work we shall gladly co-operate. But this economy cannot be based on the individual profit motive, nor can it subsist within the framework of imperialist system. It means a new world order, both politically and economically, and free nations co-operating together for their own as well as the larger good.

Jawaharlal Nehru

(October 4, 1940)

Sah Brothers

603/4 "NIRANJAN" 6TH FLOOR
99, NETAJI SUBHASH ROAD
BOMBAY 400 002

Politics of Communalism : Lessons from Kerala

BENNY JOSEPH

Kerala, known for its religious amity, is threatened with violent polarisation amongst the different religious groups following the recent incidents of communal violence. This was unusual for a State which stood in the forefront of many historic struggles, be it social or political. It also occurred in a State which stands better in the distribution of a number of basic services such as education, primary health and public distribution systems catering to all sections of the population. Hence the question needs to be answered as to what are the underlying factors that were responsible for a sudden communal conflagration, irrespective of the social and political developments. The recent incidents, at the same time, are a pointer to the fact that it may be too premature to orchestrate such a development, for the State is now sliding into a deep crisis in the social, political and economic levels. The ability of the political parties, social groups to arrest this degeneration stands questionable. Opportunistic manipulation of the existing order is the rule of the time.

The politics in the State had,for a long time been centerd on coalition partnership resulting in the deterioration of political ethos at all levels.

The Left parties have lost hegemony which they enjoyed during the 1950s and the early sixties. On the other hand, opportunistic influence of communal vote-banks constitute an important factor in the politics of coalitions partnerships. The Hindus, Muslims and the Christian communities have increased their fundamentalist hold over the traditional masses, no different from other parts of India. At the local level this gets turned into alarming situations when exploited by parochial leaders— religious and political. What are the factors that were responsible for such a crisis?

Kerala had a long tradition of social and political advancement. But even in this, one can see the underlying trends of communal and caste politics, be it Communist or Congress led governments. In the murky coalition politics of Kerala, it has come to be accepted that no single party or parties can come to power without the support of communal or caste sections. This being the bane of Kerala's public life, the political rivalry and conflict between the different communities, the Ezhavas, the Nairs, the Christians, Muslims,etc. control the political, social and economic structure of Kerala. Thus the political system in the State revolves on communal foundations.

Over the years, communal associations have become effective socialisation agents of the people at the local areas creating political clout. This sort of politicisation resulted in more and more communal and caste-based fractions and associations. The recent spurt of activities of the RSS (Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh) and the emergence of ISS(Islamic Sevak Sangh) are only an addition to the existing political vacuum.

Looking back at the history of the State, we find that politicisation was initiated by communal-based solidarity groups which exploited the traditional ascriptive values, which had come into being during the early phases of modernisation of the Kerala Society. These groups were considered to be the prime initiators of the early stage of development. In the second stage, the politicisation fragmented each of the solidarity groups and promoted the acceptance of many diverse values, ideologies and affiliations promoting the emergence of a multiparty system. Among the competing ideologies of the time, Marxism emerged as the major force.

●

THE four districts of Malabar with certain pockets in Alleppey and Quilon form the important Muslim areas. Ernakulam and Kottayam have the Christian population and Trivandrum and Trichur have sizeable Nair population. Medieval Kerala witnessed Nair domination. The Portuguese tried to curb the Arab power in Malabar, thus weakening the Muslim community. Subsequently, the Christians and Nairs thrived under the domination of the British rulers..

Another group,the Ezhavas, traditionally cultivating sub-tenants, classified as the depressed Sudra caste, forms around 25 per cent of the population. In Travancore, they were successful in forming the SNDP (Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam), the first communal association. It was followed by the Nair Service Society (NSS). On the other hand Cochin witnessed the Christians' entry into the Congress. In the 1940, large sections of the Ezhava population patronised communism through labour unions, peasant movements and student fronts. At the height of the nationalist movement, the Communist Party succeeded in uniting the working class and peasants, in voicing economic and political demands through common agitations. Under

The author is a senior research scholar, Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

the leadership of E.M.S. Namboodiripad and A.K.Gopalan, it succeeded in building up a tight-knit and trained communist cadre. The reorganisation of the State in 1956, altered the communal composition of the population dominated by Nair-Christian axis by the ideology of Marxism. But this was soon thwarted. In all the major events that followed, like the Education Bill Agitation, Liberation Movement(1957-59) the Christians, Nairs and the Muslims entered into an anti-Communist alliance. Thus, for the first time the secular ideology of the Left parties got a stiff opposition from the communal groups. Later a section of the Christian community switched its loyalty from the Indian National Congress to form the Kerala Congress in the 1970s.

In the electoral alliance of the 1960s, the Communists adopted the Muslim League as a partner in the United Front ministry. Subsequently the League found the fulfilment of the creation of a new district, Malappuram, with a large Muslim population. Soon, the League was also successful in bargaining for coveted posts in the cabinet.

The introduction of modern education and subsequent Communist ideology brought secular trends in the modernisation process of Kerala. The growth of journals and newspapers changed the agricultural society, resulting in structural shift in land ownership. Media and communication helped the development of the vernacular language and literature. The stream of radical literary writers were of great value in initiating change, fighting the traditional beliefs and customs. It led to new social themes for radical change.

At the political level, the period of the early seventies witnessed the most militant mass mobilisation by the CPI. Land reforms and the resultant agrarian legislations had a constant mass involvement at the grass roots. With the trade union movement, many industries were brought under the Minimum Wages Act. The wage policy gave the Communists much support among the lower strata of the population. Cooperation schemes, like the Toddy Tappers' societies, which ultimately turned violent kept the working class in the forefront of many agitations. These movements have virtually come to a standstill now.

Economic Backwardness and Unemployment Problem

The developments that took place at the social levels were not matched by corresponding developments in the economy. Shortage of land and unemployment poses a perennial problem crippling future development. Low rate of industrial growth and its resultant social cost is another pointer. Trade union militancy and daily wages have increased to alarming heights. In Kerala,where nearly 80 per cent of the population own less than half an hectare of land, it is no exaggeration that the wage factor has made life difficult for the small holders.

The inflow of remittances from the Gulf in the late 1970s is another factor. Previous governments failed to channel the Gulf money in a proper way which would have helped the development of the state. Contrary to the existing redistributive efforts, the remittances created a consumer boom, unparalleled in the history of the State. This in fact caused a sudden polarisation in the existing standard of living.

At the social level, it created multiple problems. Along with Gulf money, populist pulp literature and pot-boiler movies degenerated the culture that had been painstakingly built over the years through radical literary movements. Economic backwardness has raised the number of unemployed and the State has become a virtual 'exporter' of manpower. Even though subsequent governments have been successful in working for the advancement of education, this has not been supplemented by creating additional job opportunities.

Political Factors

Both the Communists and the Congress have to be blamed for the existing crisis in Kerala today. Both groups had opportunistic alliance with the communal parties,particularly the Muslim League and Kerala Congress. Factionalism has always been a problem with the Congress party in the State. In the last few years it is not able to produce a viable leadership acceptable to the people who could rejuvenate the Party. On the other hand, leaders have used parochial methods for fan following and electoral victory.

The Communist movement, witnessed in the heydays of the early fifties and sixties, has come down. With the decline of international communism and the subsequent debacle of the Soviet Union, communism in Kerala has its own peculiar problems. Old leaders and grassroot party activities have declined. New leaders are yet to project their capability in the changing political environment. Thus the parties that have ruled the roost over the past one decade have been minority-based communal parties. This has resulted in a situation whereby no group, be it the LDF or the UDF,can be in power without catering to the interests of the muslim, the Christian and other minority- based factions. Even these minority fronts are devided on many issues and have failed to produce a coherent plan of action for their parties. As a result, religion is often highlighted for political ends. In such a situation, it is quite obvious that a certain section of the Muslims have been cornered through fundamentalist ideas by parochial leaders.

BJP as a factor in Kerala Politics

Even though Hindu communalism cannot make any headway in Kerala politics, it has made its impact. With Muslim League gaining much access through its long alliance with major groups, its communal influence spread from the Muslim majority areas of northern

(Continued on page 34)

US-Japan Relations In New World Order

THOMAS SEBASTIAN

America is on its way to build a new world order by its leadership. The new world order, in Bush's comprehension, means "to build a new international system in accordance with our own values and ideals.... We must not only protect out citizens and our interests, but help create a new world in which our fundamental values not only survive but flourish."

However, the present economic crisis decelerates this move. Reeling under economic recession, the US is trying hard to improve its economic condition by various means so as to stabilise its economy. In this context it has become imperative for the US to set right the economic friction between Washington and Tokyo in order to preserve its leadership role in the new world order. The nature of the US-Japan relationship is bound to have a telling impact on the evolving world order.

Economic Friction in US-Japan Relations

In the US-Japan relations immediately after World War II, the US had been obsessed with security matters. On the other side, Japan gave supreme importance to the economy in its post-War policy. Its economy took off in a guaranteed security environment which was provided by the US. A reasonable degree of Japanese economic recovery was acceptable to the US. This was to be exhibited as 'success story" because of Japan's pro-Western contacts and policy. The US-Japan economic relations in the 1950s and the 1960s were basically harmonious. Specific product-related issues were handled through voluntary steps. The competition from traditional Japanese exports like clothing, textiles and shoes was resolved by informal voluntary export restraints (VERs).

The economy gradually took precedence over security issues in the late sixties and early seventies. In the 1970s the Nixon Administration was ready to use the "Enemy Act" provision to restrain Japan on textile export. With the two oil crises and subsequent inflation, unemployment and severe recession, the US economy had been facing a worsening situation. Besides, Japan's new competitive and high- quality consumer goods and machinery were posing challenges to the US.

While textiles remained a potential source of tension in the US-Japan relations, in the late seventies technology, particularly electronic items such as colour television, became a major irritant in their bilateral trade. The US has been demanding protection of its electronic firms, chiefly those connected with colour television, steel and automobiles. In the case of colour television, the US tried to overcome the crisis by negotiating orderly marketing agreements (OMA) with Japan to limit colour television exports. By 1976, Japanese colour television exports had captured 40 per cent of the US market. The trade deficit of the US with Japan shot up severely. It became approximately $ 11 billion in 1978.

The author is an M.Phil. student in the Centre for East Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Apart from the electronic problem, the automobile issue began to assume the character of a significant irritant. Japan in the 1970s continued to maintain an exceptionally high tariff even after the lifting of quantitative restrictions on imports of automobiles. The protective policy followed by Japan had its adverse impact on its trading partners, particularly the US. Frictions accruing from bilateral trade have been on the increase since the 1980s. To sort out trade-related problems, the US and Japan initiated the structural impediments initiative (SII). Through structural adjustments they hope to overcome the economic problems. But little breakthrough has been made; moreover, the economic issue has been taking serious dimension in the early 1990s.

Relations in 1990s and Bush's Visit

As in the past, the present US-Japan relationship is increasingly characterised by frictions, resentment and mutual recrimination. In other words, the present friction is in one way or another an extension of an already existing one. The economic issue is the thorn in the flesh of the current US-Japan relations. The overriding capacity of Japan's economic power, the recession in the US economy and the subsequent economic and political problems are perceived as a grave threat to the US economy in the coming years. This has become a matter of serious concern for the present US Administration, for it will have a telling impact on the impending US Presidential election. Therefore, it is imperative for the Bush Administration to weather the present crisis with as little damage as possible.

Since US' trade with Japan is a substantial one accounting for the lion's share of the US' balance of trade deficit, it is all the more necessary for the US to find ways to overcome such bilateral economic problems. That would also broaden the prospects of Bush's re-election in the forthcoming Presidential election. It is the domestic imperatives of the economic problems and the coming Presidential election that took precedence over other issues and precipitated Bush's early visit to Japan in the month of January 1992. To quote the *Time* magazine :

> Abruptly cancelled by the White House, for domestic political reasons in early November, the tour was just as impulsively revived, then converted into a re-election road show with Japan trade practices at the whipping post

Bush's visit to Japan focused primarily on bilateral economic issues. The economic bargain was made on a wide range of items besides auto and auto parts. The focal point of Bush's visit was to resolve the US automakers' issue. Bush was accompanied by nearly 21 CEOs of big US firms and they in their negotiation stated that they had been incurring loss in their trade with Japan. The Big Three automakers—General Motors Corporation, Ford Motor Corporation, Chrysler Corporation—in their report noted that their sales fell to an eight-year low last year, plunging more than 10 per cent. The US did, at the trade negotiations, obtain a positive response from Japan. As a result, Japan's domestic automakers decided to increase their purchase of the US-made parts from about $ 9 billion in fiscal 1990 to 19 billion by fiscal 1994. Besides, Japanese automakers came forward with a voluntary plan to sell about 20,000 imported US cars yearly through their dealer network within a few years' time-frame.

The talks between two leaders culminated in the Tokyo Declaration. Attached to the declaration was the three-part supplementary document called the Global Partnership Plan of Action which stipulates a concrete action both the governments have decided to follow in pursuance of the goals of this declaration. The declaration takes into account five issues of contention and suggests means to resolve them. The five major areas of bilateral cooperations are: (1) cooperation to promote world peace and prosperity; (2) political and security relations; (3) economic and trade relations; (4) science and technology; and (5) enhancement of mutual understanding and exchanges. Although the Global Partnership Plan of Action covers a wide range of bilateral issues, it is the auto and autoparts which has been given the maximum emphasis in it. The action plan was formulated to remedy the present economic and trade problems so as to stabilise the US economy.

Miyazawa's Visit

Taking into account different factors like historical linkages between the two nations and the international environment that condition their relationship, one could draw some tentative conclusions as to what would be the possible policy options for these countries in future and the nature of their relationship. The context and the existential exigencies that determined the nature and characteristics of the US-Japan relations have changed remarkably, owing to the revolutionary developments in the world political scenario, namely, the end of the Cold War and the concomitant demise of the erstwhile Soviet Union, the Gulf war, etc. Given this changed environment marked by worldwide economic recession and protectionalism, the US and Japan are restructuring the founding principles of the alliance. The emphasis is being shifted from security interests to economic interests. This altered outlook is evident from the periodic visits of the heads of governments and their respective governments' enunciation of policies on bilateral issues.

The outcome of Kiichi Miyazawa's recent visit to the United States seems to be reinforcing the US-Japan relations in the new world order. Japan's positive responses to the US needs, particularly in the economic front, appear to remove the clouds of conjecture. Japan, since Bush's trip last January, cooperated with the US in a number of regional and global issues. During the visit of the US Vice-President, Dan Quayle, to Tokyo, Japan agreed to coordinate efforts for extending financial help to the East European countries. Japan pledged to provide $400 million in aid in conjunction with the US-managed Enterprise Funds scheme set up in several East European countries to support small and medium scale private ventures.

In addition to this, Miyazawa's acclaim of the US as the world leader and the subsequent revelation of Japan's intention to bolster US leadership unveils the policies opted by Japan in the new world order. The Miyazawa Government decided to extend another economic package to resuscitate the sluggish US economy. The Liberal Democratic Party worked out a package covering extra outlays up to $7 trillion.

On the security front, Miyazawa reiterated that the US forces should remain in the Pacific region as a guarantor of peace and stability in the region. Although the economic problems are yet to be solved, a congenial atmosphere is being developed to overcome or minimise them. The present gesture of Japan is expected to boost the US economy which is plagued by recession. Moreover, it would brighten Bush's prospects in the forthcoming Presidential election.

The US is reciprocating this gesture of goodwill and cooperation on the part of Japan by consenting to Japan's demands. In the first place, Bush—as was already agreed upon in his talks with Shim Kanemaru, Vice-President of Japan's Liberal Democratic Party—did talk to the Russian President, Boris Yeltsin, on the latter's visit to Washington last June, about the Japan-Russian territorial issue. In the second place, Bush assured the visiting Japanese Prime Minister that America will support Japan's move for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council. The US approach on this score is to recognise Japan as an economic power as well as to provide Japan with an opportunity to play a major role in world politics, a role commensurate with its economic strength.

From the strategic, political and economic point of view cooperation between the two nations is not only a guarantor of peace and stability at the regional and global level but also an indicator of the nature of the evolving world order. The political cooperation is strengthened by economic cooperation. This is not merely due to the complementary nature of both countries' endowments. That is, the US with its political and military advantage in the new world order is being economically bolstered up by an economic giant—Japan. The present Japanese readiness to help in meeting the current US economic needs, and the US response by promising support to Japan's move towards acquiring adequate representation (position) in international institutions like the UN, IMF, World Bank, etc. are going to facilitate the evolution of the US-led new world order.

This complementary cooperation of the two giants can be detrimental to the interest of the Third World countries. For, the integration of Japan's economic strength with the US political and military power will develop an environment where they lay down the law. This may lead to the emergence of a US-Japan hegemony in the new world order. ■

The Crisis of Today's Ideologies

ERIC HOBSBAWM

The following is the text of a lecture delivered by the author, a leading British Marxist historian, at the Coloquio de Inviern, organised by the Unam *and* Nexos, *at Los Grandes Cambios de Nuestro Tiempo, Mexico (February 10-20, 1992). It is being reproduced with due acknowledgement from the* New Left Review, *London.*

—Editor

I have been asked to speak on 'the crisis of ideology, culture and civilisation' today—an enormous subject, and one not easy to define. Yet very few people will doubt that there is today such a crisis, even if they cannot say precisely in what it consists. So let me begin by trying to compare the present situation with earlier periods in the era which began with the great revolutions of the late eighteenth century, that is to say, in the era in which, one way or another, human beings have lived in a material world and in societies undergoing constant and unpredictable change.

In some respects, at least for those who think and write about society, all times since the French and first Industrial Revolutions have been times of crisis, for every generation has been faced with experiences and developments that had no precedent, and for which past experience and theories based on it provided no guidance—or at least no adequate guidance. And yet it is also true that historical change in some periods has been so headlong and profound that it has been more than usually difficult to come to terms with or even to grasp, let alone understand, it. We are now living through such a moment, and we have been living through such a period for the past generation or two.

I am thinking not only of the dramatic events in world politics that have been taking place before our eyes for the past two or three years—and I use the words 'before our eyes' literally, for the network of modern television has made it possible for us actually to *see* these events taking place almost as they happened; and modern communications technology has enabled us to participate in them, if we so wish. I am here thinking of a schoolteacher in the English provinces who was in constant contact, via electronic mail, with her colleagues in Moscow during the abortive coup of last August. She could actually inform them of the situation as it was reported on television in Staffordshire, but not, at the time, in Moscow. This was certainly the first occasion in history when time and distance were thus virtually eliminated.

Global Upheaval

The events of recent years have indeed been spectacular and world changing—and also unexpected and unpredicted. Yet the revolutionary nature of the period we have been—we are still—living through goes far beyond those changes in global politics which are now making it impossible for cartographers to prepare atlases that will not be out of date in a matter of months. Never before in history has ordinary human life, and the societies in which it takes place, been so radically transformed in so short a time: not merely within a single lifetime, but within part of a lifetime. Let us consider three such changes.

For much of recorded history most human beings have lived off the land and its animals. This was so at the time of the Second World War, for even in highly industrialised countries like the USA and Germany a quarter of the population still lived by agriculture. Yet etween 1950 and 1975 this ceased to be the case over the greater part of the earth's surface. In Europe, in the Americas, and in the Western Islamic world—in fact everywhere except Continental South and East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa—peasants now form a minority of the population. And this process occurred with dramatic speed. In Spain and Portugal, in Colombia and Mexico, the percentage of peasants halved in twenty years; in the Dominican Republic, Algeria, Iraq and Jamaica it dropped by more than half in the same length of time. (I deliberately take my examples from the less-developed world.)

The second change to consider is the unprecedented creation of intellectuals as a mass demographic phenomenon. Before World War II, people who underwent higher, or even secondary, education, formed a negligible fraction of the population even in the most developed countries. Three of the largest, most developed and most educated countries—Germany, France and Britain—with a total population of 150 million, then contained no more than 150,000 university students. In the 1980s Ecuador alone contained more than twice as many. In fact by then educationally ambitious countries had upward of 2.5 per cent of their *total* population (men, women and childern) in higher education at any time. Once again this expansion was explosive. To stick only to well-schooled Europe, the numbers of students multiplied up to ninefold (Spain, Norway) in twenty years.

The third change is in the position of women. Let us consider merely one figure. In 1940 only 14 per cent of married women in the USA who lived with their husbands went out to work for pay. In 1980 more than half of all US married women did so. Once again, the percentage just about doubled between 1950 and 1970. I need not stress the fact – unthinkable before 1950 – that women are today common as prime ministers and elected presidents.

I could go on, but there is no need. For I have said enough to demonstrate that human societies, and the relations of people within them, have undergone a sort of economic, technological and sociological earthquake within the lifetime of people who have barely got beyond middle age. There has never before been anything like it in world history, for, as I have pointed out, these are not localised or regional changes but global ones even though their specific impact differs from one country to another. And it would be quite astonishing if such drastic changes in material life did not also produce crises in what Marx called the 'superstructure' of ideas – in culture and civilisation.

However, the developments of the second half of this century have also, and inevitably, generated new material problems with which all societies and insofar as they are affected by them all human beings have to grapple. I shall mention only three. The first is the extraordinary demographic explosion which has, since 1950, multiplied world population by about 2.5, and that of Latin America by almost four. A world of over 6000 million human beings has no precedent. The second is the growing inequality between rich and poor countries, which has been reinforced by the disproportionate growth of the population in the poor countries. To put the matter simply – no doubt too simply – the developed economies of the post-War period, that is, the members of the OECD, in the first half of this century represented about one-third of the world's population. Today they represent no more than 15-20 per cent. And the gap between the GNP per capita of the rich countries and that of the poor has widened at an accelerating rate since 1950. Today twentysix countries, with just under 15 per cent of the world's population, enjoy a mean GNP per capita of over $18,000. This is about five times the mean GNP of *the world* and fiftyfive times the GNP of the 3000 million – rather more than half of humanity – who live on a GNP per capita of about $330. An obvious symptom of this unprecedented global disequilibrium is the dramatic surge of migrants from the poor countries into the rich that is now taking place, insofar as racism and xenophobia in the rich ones does not erect barriers against it. But for how long can this situation persist? No world of such spectacular and growing inequality can remain stable for long.

The third consideration is the now familiar set of ecological problems. Thanks to the extraordinary triumphs of science and productive technology we are, for the first time in history, in a position to make our planet uninhabitable. At all events, it is today clear, as it was not before World War II, that unlimited and uncontrolled economic growth without concern for its environmental (including human) consequences, and without systematic management of the resources of the globe, is already leading us towards a fairly imminent era of disaster. The question is how the global action that is necessary can be brought about.

A General Crisis

The developments I have briefly hinted at are quite enough to explain why we find ourselves today in a 'crisis of ideology, culture and civilisation', quite apart from the more immediate economic and political dramas that are being played out today before our eyes, and in which we, indeed, have small walk-on parts ourselves. For, at least in the zone of Western civilisation and economic development, neither past experience nor the ideologies and theories inherited from the pre-industrial past or developed since the eighteenth century, seem to fit the situation of the last quarter of this century.

What I am saying is that the crisis we find ourselves in is not specific to this or that economic or political or ideological system, but general. It is, for instance, a crisis of older and younger traditional Western religions as well as of the ideologies descended from the eighteenth century Enlightenment, as both liberalism and socialism and its various versions are. To give one obvious example, the Roman Catholic Church itself has difficulty in recruiting enough priests and in raising enough income from the faithful, and – in Europe at least – even its most loyal members in the most traditional strongholds refuse to follow its injunctions. Italian women vote in favour of divorce and birth control, and their men, according to the *Financial Times* a neutral observer of these matters, provide by far the largest market in Europe for condoms. The crisis of traditional Churches and the rise of fundamentalist or dissident sects, such as we observe in Latin America, is not my subject. I mention it here only because it is important to realise that, as the second millennium draws to its close, in one way or another the ground is shaking under *everyone's* feet, at least in large parts of the world, including Latin America. We are not talking only about family debates between the ideologies of the nineteenth-century West. Our drama – whatever the parts we have in it – is today being played out in a theatre with which we are unfamiliar, on a stage we cannot quite recognise, and amid unpredicted and unexpected, and insufficiently understood, changes of scenery.

There is another, and somewhat more specific, sense in which the present crisis is global and general: I mean in the more strictly economic and political sense. Western Communism (but not so far, it should be noted, Asian communism) has suddenly and totally collapsed. This has led journalists, politicians and ideologues to play zero-sum games. If communism has lost, then its antagonist, capitalism, must have won. If socialist economies have collapsed, then their binary opposite, free-market liberalism, must have triumphed. Yet this is patently not an adequate picture of the world economy in the early 1990s.

When historians look back on our half century from the next millennium – which is not far away – they will, I think, certainly see communist systems, descended from the October Revolution, which, from the end of the 1950s on revealed their increasing inferiority to Western market economies. From the 1970s on, they began to show signs of breakdown. However, they will also see a world capitalism that, after a quarter of a century of extraordinary and unpredicted expansion, entered another era of crisis in the 1970s. From this it has not yet emerged. During its shortlived 'golden age', 1950-1973, capitalism appeared to achieve the impossible. It virtually eliminated unemployment, economic slumps and in the developed countries serious poverty. It enjoyed constant and accelerating economic growth, even in its more sluggish countries, and gave its working classes the expectation and the reality of constant material improvement. Yet from the early 1970s on this ceased to be so. Capitalism once again has mass unemployment, poverty and even hunger and homelessness amid the wealth of even very rich countries. It has static or even declining incomes and serious depressions.

No doubt in the rich and advanced market economies these are comparatively mild setbacks; but what confronts the ruins of the Eastern socialist economies today is not a triumphant capitalism but a global capitalist economy in trouble, and recognising that it is in trouble. One even hears reference to the 1930s. Consider a recent public-opinion poll from South Florida in the USA: 29 per cent of the respondents had members of their families out of work, and 34 per cent had members unemployed; no less than 73 per cent expected the quality of life in the next generation to worsen.[1] As for the developing countries, again with the regional exception of Eastern Asia, the 1970s, and particularly the 1980s, have been a miserable period, as nobody in Latin America and Africa needs to be told. In fact, the impact of the 1980s in Brazil and Peru has been far worse than of the slump of the 1930s.

In short the late twentieth century will be seen in historical perspective as one of those recurrent periods of crisis in the growth of the world economy, which shook all parts and regions, though it affected each very differently. Such periods are familiar to historians under the name of 'Kondratiev long waves', though there is absolutely no consensus among scholars about what they are, or even whether they exist. Such periods in the past, or at any rate the downswings of the 'long waves', were always associated with major shifts and restructurings of the world economy, and—I would add—'crisis of ideology' culture and civilisation. By sheer chance such a 'Kondratiev long wave' occurred exactly a century before this one. Its upswing is usually dated from 1851 to 1873, its downswing from 1873 to 1896. If this provides any precedent, the world economy should return to a less troubled period of growth by the middle of the 1990s, though it will certainly not return to the unproblematic 'golden age' of the 1950s and 1960s. Certainly the most dramatic result of this era of crisis has been the destruction of the Western communist economies and political systems, but this cannot be separated from the general development of the world economy since the end of the 'golden age', if only because the economic collapse of Western communism was largely due to the growing integration of these systems in the global economy, with whose uncertainties and fluctuations they were entirely unable to cope.

Playing the game of binary opposites is equally misleading in politics. Nothing seems simpler than to contrast tyranny and freedom, totalitarianism and democracy, and to identify the one with communism (which has been defeated) and the other with the free market (which has triumphed). This last equation is constantly made by Washington spokesmen who measure the degree of democracy in the former Soviet Union by the degree to which a market economy is functioning in that region. Against this form of theological argument, it is possible to quote Francis Fukuyama himself, the author of the notorious thesis from which he now appears to retreat like an octopus amid clouds of his own ink. This was that the end of communism was 'the end of history', because it had brought about the ultimate global triumph of liberal democracy. Fukuyama now observes in his new book, with regret, that there are plenty of 'market-oriented' authoritarian states, from the point of view of economic growth, they do much better than democratic states. This is because 'authoritarian regimes are in principle better able to follow truly liberal economic policies undistorted by redistributive goals that constrain growth'.[2] But this is by the way. Let me return to the more general question.

It is perfectly true that there is a fundamental difference between states that forbid their citizens to travel abroad and those that do not; between states that will only permit officially defined truths, officially certified facts and officially authorised writings to be published and that do not. And yet the liberalism which guarantees such individual freedom is not democracy, though we must all prefer democracies that have it. The Habsburg monarchy of Austria was surprisingly liberal—unlike imperial Germany it even permitted socialists to be university professors—but it was not a democracy. The Irish Republic has a more consistent and unbroken history as a democracy since 1922, longer than most other states in the world. But for long periods it was not a liberal state, if only because it was by its Constitution committed to the values of the Roman Catholic Church of Vatican I.

Moreover, the term 'democracy' itself is not much of a guide to the nature of states. After all, during the Cold War both the USA and the so-called 'peoples' democracies' claimed to be democratic; even the Democratic People's Republic of (North) Korea did so. True, a country such as the German Democratic Republic was not democratic in any realistic sense of the word. But even if we define democracy in the liberal-democratic way, as is almost universally done today, this does not tell us much. States where the central authorities are elected by universal suffrage, from among candidates representing a number of rival parties, today include the USA and Japan, all—I think—of the successor states of the USSR, Albania and Israel, Papua-New Guinea and Paraguay, not forgetting

Mexico. Having representative assemblies and elected governments, sometimes even honestly elected presidents, is certainly important, but it does not make post-Communist Azerbaijan like Great Britain, nor Japan like Sweden. Nor does it tell us anything in itself about the prospects of survival for such democratic systems.

In 1919 all twelve successor states to the German Austro-Hungarian and Russian Empires were liberal democracies except Soviet Russia. Fifteen years later only Czechoslovakia and Finland were. To see the world as simply choosing between two and only two political alternatives is not illuminating.

Limits of Capitalism

This is also true of the debate between liberalism and socialism that is at present taking place; or more exactly, about the long and agonised rearguard action which the intellectual and political Left has been conducting as it retreats before the advance of a capitalist liberal ideology, both political and economic, in the past two decades. It is a debate conducted within the same family of what George Bernard Shaw called 'the great sentimental verities' of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity; of Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. It is a debate conducted, on both sides, in the wrong terms; but if I may say so, the terms on which it is conducted by one side are more wrong than those of the other side.

Socialists of all varieties have ceased to believe in the possibility of an entirely non-market economy, and in the desirability and feasibility of a centrally planned state economy of the kind that developed in the USSR. Some never believed in it, but even those who did no longer do so. Since the 1950s all communist states have tried to introduce greater flexibility into their planned economies, essentially by introducing market elements. It was not that they wanted to stick to economic Stalinism, but that they did not know how to break with it. I am not, of course, denying that socialists in the past, including Marx, dreamed of an entirely non-market, perhaps even non-monetary, communist society; they did, but that utopia cannot be maintained any longer, and it is not.

On the other hand, the opposite belief, namely that the completely uncontrolled free market should be left to allocate resources and will do so optimally, is politically dominant in large parts of the world, even though it is theoretically bizarre, and practically flies in the face of the facts. What is happening today in Russia and other parts of the former communist region is the sudden imposition of a theological dogma as unrealistic as the attempt to construct socialism by the central command in a single country. The consequences have been and are disastrous. The Eastern economies certainly needed fundamental reforms, but the consequence of plunging them into the free market from one day to the next have ranged from the tragic to the fatal. Moreover, this was entirely to be expected. What makes the policies of economic neo-liberalism so incomprehensible, at least for people of my generation, is that these very policies, in the 1930s, demonstrated their inability to cope with the great world Depression which, in most people's opinion, they had brought about. The reform of world capitalism under the US auspices after World War II was based specifically on the rejection of this free-market theology, that is, on the acceptance of a mixed public/private, market-led and planned economy. As Carlos Fuentes has put it: this was 'capitalism exposed to the critique of socialism and learning from it'. The target of the Reaganite and Thatcherite ideologues is not only Marx but Keynes and F.D. Roosevelt — that is, the men whose policies inaugurated the only genuinely golden age of Western capitalism.

It is quite understandable that there should have been some reaction against these policies, when it emerged in the 1970s that even the most successful capitalism could not permanently palliate the contradictions of the system. It was natural that, once the global boom ended, the costs of unrestrained welfare systems, bureaucracy, inefficient management of public enterprise, and other such outlays, should be brought under better control. Yet this does not rationally justify the return to an ideology — and, in the USA and Britain, to policies — of a long-discredited uncontrolled economic liberalism. In fact, the fashion for this ideology is now rapidly retreating in the core countries of developed capitalism, although it is still being recommended to developing and ex-socialist countries.

Theological argument and propaganda apart, the debate between liberals and socialists today is, therefore, not one on the uncontrolled market *versus* the all-controlling state. It is not for or against economic planning, which exists in capitalist as well as socialist economies — no large corporation could function without it — and not for or against publicly owned and managed enterprise, which even market liberals have always accepted in principle. It is about the limits of capitalism and the market uncontrolled by public action. To put it the other way, it is about the ends of public policy, or, if you prefer, the necessary priorities of public action.

Socialists do not, and cannot, accept Adam Smith's view that the pursuit of self-interest by every person will produce socially optimal results, even when they accept that it may maximise the material wealth of nations — which it only does in specific circumstances. They cannot believe that social justice can be achieved simply by the operations of capital accumulation and the market, and they agree with Vilfredo Pareto that a society which had no specific place for social justice and morality cannot survive. In this, of course, they are not opposed to *all* liberals, but only to the currently dominant neo-liberal purists, or, since we are talking about men like the recently deceased Friedrich von Hayek, palaeo-liberal free-marketeers. They also share this view with the dominant social-Christian champions of the 'social market economy' whose influence is dominant in the European Community.

Socialism or Barbarism?

However, quite apart from differences in the conception of what would constitute a just and free society, socialists differ from Keynesian Liberals and Christian Democratic social marketeers in one major respect. They do not simply believe that the admittedly antisocial consequences of unrestrained free-market capitalism can be mitigated, perhaps even made harmless, by public action and policy, but that the system by its very nature continues to generate and regenerate 'internal contradictions' – to use the Marxist term – which it cannot overcome.

Consequently, in practice as well as in theory, social managemen must be more than – to use the British Keynesian phrase – 'fine-tuning' a motor-vehicle that, basically, runs well enough to transport humanity to where it wishes to go. The vehicle does not run well. If we suppose that the development of global capitalism creates problems which cannot be removed by such tinkering because it is the essence of the system that it creates them, then a far more systematic and permanent control of the free pursuit of private interest may be necessary than even reforming Liberals or social marketeers envisage.

In principle, this is recognised by moderate liberal economists through the concept of 'externalities': namely the effect of the world on the individual. 'Externalities' are seen by neo-classical economists from the point of view of the individual – person or corporation – namely, as the effect on it of actions from outside over which it has no control; for instance, the opening of a motorway may greatly increase the potential profit of real estate situated close to its exits, and greatly lower the resale value of family houses situated alongside its traffic flow. But, of course, for non-economists 'externalities' are not just something that affects individual costs or utilities. They are what the world consists of. The city of Mexico in which we attempt to breathe is precisely the mass of 'externalities' that constitute it. And indeed the ecological problem is today the most familiar example of negative externalities, just as government provision of 'public goods' such as education, social services and various kinds of infrastructure, are the most familiar example of positive externalities.

Now where there are externalities – that is, practically everywhere – their general effect (and I am quoting Paul Samuelson) is to cause 'free pricing to be non-optimal, thereby creating a *prima facie* case for (public intervention)'. In all such instances (I quote this pillar of liberal economics again), 'a strong case can be made for supplanting complete individualism by some kind of group action.'[3] Yet suppose we assume that the ecological problems that have arisen from the uncontrolled growth of the world economy since 1950 are so grave as to put the planet and its inhabitants at serious risk within a matter of a young person's lifetime. In that case, a drastic interference with the freedom of producers and consumers may be rationally necessary to aviod catastrophe. If it were globally practicable, such interference would not only be politically difficult in liberal-democratic societies, but it would also have to substitute 'sustainable growth' for maximum economic growth; and it is far from clear whether the private enterprise economy, which has always operated through maximising growth, could operate in any other way.

In short, the difference between liberals and socialists today is not about socialism but about capitalism. Both agree, with negligible exceptions, that the socialism of the Soviet-type communist regimes was tyrannical, did not work, and is to be rejected. Whether it should ever have been called 'socialism' is a question debated among socialists, which need not concern us here.

Socialists and liberals (with the exception of the neo-liberal theologians) both accept a mixed economy in principle. Many socialists – especially in social-democratic countries dedicated in theory to socialism – ask themselves whether there is an actual line separating non-socialist mixed economies from socialist ones, and if so where it is to be drawn and what distinguishes societies on the socialist side from those on the non-socialist side. This is, at least for the present, a highly academic question, which I can also leave to one side. However, most liberals believe that the motor of capitalist development is basically sound, requiring only a modest amount of control and management, though it may sometimes need a systematic overhaul, as after the Great Slump and World War II. The modern world, it is assumed, can function under the conditions of a capitalism of reasonably free and democratic societies.

This, however, is precisely the question. The problems of a globe which can today be made uninhabitable by the sheer exponential growth in production and pollution, the problems of a world divided into a minority of vey rich states and a great majority of the poor, cannot be solved in this way. They do not even, in the last decade of the century, *look* as though they could be solved without systematic and planned action by governments within states and internationally, and without an attack on the central strongholds of the consumer market economy. Things will not just right themselves. That is what socialists remind liberals. If this public action and planning is not undertaken by people who believe in the values of freedom, reason and civilisation, it will be undertaken by people who do not, because it will have to be undertaken by someone. Unfortunately it is most likely to be undertaken by that most dangerous phenomenon of our *fin-de-siecle:* Right-wing, demagogic, xenophobic, nationalist regimes equally hostile to liberalism and socialism, because both represent the values of reason, progress and the age of the great revolutions. That is the danger. Rosa Luxemburg warned us that the real alternative of twentieth-century history was 'socialism or barbarism'. We don't have socialism: let us beware of the rise of barbarism, especially barbarism combined with high technology. ■

References

1 *Miami Herald*, February 1992.

2 Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, London, 1992, p. 124

3 Paul Samuelson, *The Economist*, New York, 1976, pp. 477-8

BOOK REVIEW

Shifting Priorities in Urban Politics

INDIRA GHOSH

Urban studies as an area of social science research is of comparatively recent origin. The first group of scholars to have been attracted to the field were the urban historians, then came the demographers followed closely by urban sociologists. Political scientists' foray into the domain may be the latest. Most of the political studies dealing with urban affairs, however, were analyses of the electoral politics, voting behaviour, majority-minority conflicts, and so on. Political analyses with urban developmental problems as their focus were still few and far between. In Western societies where urban history, etc. gained currency much before Indian politics of urban redevelopment had also received considerable academic attention. In India the subject is still new as is urban history and as such Ajay Mehra's book under review here is most welcome.

Mehra who teaches Political Science in the University of Delhi and is associated with the New Delhi-based Centre for Policy Research in its research activities had earlier written his Ph.D. dissertation on the same subject. The present book is a revised and edited version of the same and as such does not suffer from the shortcomings that a Ph.D. dissertation generally does.

Politics of Urban Redevelopment: A study of Old Delhi by Ajay K. Mehra; Sage, New Delhi; 1991; pp. 176; Rs 185.

Having dwelt at length about the theoretical postulates of urban politics and scanned through the existing literature on them and related fields Mehra has focussed upon the Old Delhi area to construct his thesis—urban redevelopment is primarily governed by local political considerations which are influenced by the reverberations of national politics.

Living in Old Delhi by any standard is not a comfortable experience. The town is congested, overpopulated and filthy. The civic amenities are too insufficient, resulting in environmental pollution and degradation. As hub of the wholesale market it invites millions of people during the day who make use of the scant civic facilities without contributing financially or otherwise to their up-keep. Lately it has also witnessed the growth of small industries adding to the miseries further.

Old Delhi, built by Emperor Shahjahan, is the seventh city of Delhi. Known as Shahjahanabad after his name, it was built when the emperor had decided to shift his capital from Agra to Delhi in 1638. Soon it became the centre of political and commercial activity and remained so for generations. It was only after 1707, the year Aurangzeb died, that its decline set in. The process was completed with the British conquest in 1803. During the mutiny of 1857 the city was literally ravaged by the British soldiers. Whatever importance Old Delhi had enjoyed was also stripped with the British decision to shift the capital from Calcutta to Delhi in 1911 and build the new capital around the village Raisina which later became famous as New Delhi. Shahjahanabad, the so-called Old Delhi, was increasingly neglected and slowly it was relegated to the background. Following the partition of India, which brought in its train the most violent riots between Hindus and Muslims and an unprecedented refugee migration, mauled the city further. Influx of refugees into the city as well as growth of trading and business centres in and around the city destroyed the unique cultural flavour of the area.

It was not that the government was totally unaware or unconcerned about the deteriorating conditions of Old Delhi. It was as early as in 1926 that the Delhi Improvement Trust was created, one of the essential components of which was the Delhi-Ajmeri Gate Slum Clearance Scheme. Later, under the inspiration of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) was formed in 1957. The basic idea was to organise a planned development of the town through a Master Plan as well as zonal plans. Subsequently, a Perspective Plan 2000 was also charted.

All these plans, however, did not achieve the real goal for which they were conceived. In the absence of a comprehensive and long-term urban policy, their developmental strategies remained shortsighted and often lopsided. The residents of the old city were never really enthusiastic about these plans. Mehra's painstaking surveys of the residents' perceptions clearly reveal the lack of popular support for the plans and their general apathy to government sponsored improvement measures. The Turkman Gate demolitions have traumatised them of the developmental endeavours.

Mehra is at his best when he discusses the "politics of urbanisation" which is essentially what the book under review is all about. The most important requisite for any redevelopment is the political will of the government and its developmental priorities. Evidently, by the time the DDA's Master Plan was poised for its take off the priorities of the government had changed. The wars with China (1962) and Pakistan (1965) and (1971) and changes in the political leadership resulted in a shift of emphasis in

Dr Ghosh belongs to the Department of Political Science, Daulat Ram College, University of Delhi.

which defence requirements started encroaching upon developmental allocations. The effect of this shift was noticeable in the plans of Delhi's development also. Given the reality that the politico-administrative structure of Delhi remained in the grip of the Central Government left little room for local political manoeuverability.

The study offers an interesting comparison between the people at large and their so-called leaders. While the people are by and large well conversant with the city's civic problems the perceptions of the leaders at best are superficial. The author's dialogue with several of the leaders showed that by and large they were more keen to criticise other leaders for their non-action rather than mobilise people for any constructive action.

Behind this apathy of the political leaders are of course the invisible hands of the vested interests. The unfettered commercialisation of the old city and unauthorised constructions go hand in glove and together they form the bane of Old Delhi's redevelopment. Both the leaders and the people interviewed by the anther underscored this point. These vested interests have powerful lobbies operating at the highest political level and as such are virtually indomitable. An interesting sidelight of the ingenuity of the unauthorised builders has been cited by the author.

> Unauthorised construction by clandestine builders has been mentioned as one of the menaces runing this city. The way these builders operate and the way they are able to construct and alter buildings violating all the municipal laws under the very nose of municipal authorities, has been termed as an 'art' by a former Chief Engineer of the MCD....[The latter] discovered that there were such expert builders in the city who could create old buildings. Not only that, there was also a 'flourishing industry in Delhi which specialises in manufacturing bricks which look appropriately Moghul and the customer, while placing an order, can choose the century to suit his requirement'. (p.141)

Yet another important aspect analysed in the book is the politics of slum clearance. Since slums are generally considered as vote banks none of the parties ever consider the problem without keeping an eye on its potential to influence the election.

On the whole Mehra's book addresses the problem of urban redevelopment from an overall perspective of politics and argues that in this game everyone is motivated by his narrow self-interest.

> An individual would flout the rules and regulations for his personal gain, local businessmen would obstruct any large-scale morphological change that hampers their business, the local politicians would not let slip their grip over their constituency, municipal bureaucracy would close its eyes on irregularities for monetary gains, political parties would keep political interest above any other consideration and the Central Government would keep the capital city under its thumb. A combination of these factors constitute the politics of urban redevelopment in Shahjahanabad. (p.154)

In conclusion, the book makes an interesting reading and it would be welcome by students and teachers alike interested in the subject of urban politics. To urban planners of course it would not be so much palatable. ■

NEW INDIAN BOOKS RELEASED DURING 21-27 AUGUST

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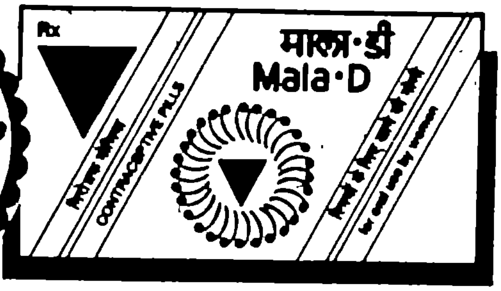
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Panchayat Bill Deceptions

BUNKER ROY

Read between the lines of the Panchayat Bill, a clear and strong message is being conveyed to the millions living at the panchayat level: that our politicians are scared of their own people. All this talk of decentralisation and giving power to the people is all humbug.

I said this openly in 1989 when it first came out and till date there has been no change. Whether it was V.P. Singh's Government, full of arm-chair experts, or the present government, the politician across board is the same.

Those who know how panchayats actually work and have risen through the ranks to become Members of Parliament (MPs), do not protest because they are vastly outnumbered. The MPs who stand out are the city slikers-smooth, oily, shallow and outspoken—who have never lived in a village or seen a panchayat at work.

Look at the people pushing the Bill and one can understand the contents. We have elected representatives who do not know what it is like to live in a village. The only time they see a panchayat is when they are invited to speak at public functions. They do not have the comprehension to feel the pain, the trauma and the fear of living together in one Village Panchayat. They drive through panchayats at terrific speed and once they are elected they do not come back for five years.

Apart from the money-lenders, the booze kings, the touts and the criminals who have a vested interest in keeping in touch with the MPs (since they alone have been responsible for putting them in Parliament), a majority of others do not know (and of course couldn't care less) who their elected representatives are. For the rural poor the reality is the Village Panchayat in the hands of declared criminals who have enough money to buy votes. Most of them are MLAs sitting in State Legislatures.

We like to think that the Panchayat Bill is being designed to protect the rural people from declared scoundrels who are using village panchayats for their own selfish ends. So where is the hope of getting protection from such people?

Way back in 1989 I said there were major flaws in the Panchayat Bill. In 1992 none of the flaws have been rectified.

●

THE first and major flaw which makes the Bill totally toothless and confirms the suspicion that the elected representatives are scared of their own people is the absence of the *Right to Recall*. Under the Special Provision for Dissolution of Panchayats the Right to Recall needs to be included. If need be the Governor must facilitate this process.

If two-thirds of the registered voters in a Gram Panchayat send a written representation to the Governor in writing that they have lost confidence in the sarpanch and the members then the Governor must facilitate the process of holding a referendum within a specified period.

If two-thirds of the registered voters on that day (with not less than 75 per cent polling according to the list of voters) indicate they have lost confidence in their village leaders the sarpanch should be dismissed and fresh elections held. There should be no right to appeal because the village collectively have conveyed their decision.

This clause alone will scare the hell out of all the sarpanches and keep them somewhat in line. It is guaranteed to minimise corruption substantially because the leaders are accountable to the community who elected them—the Gram Sabha—not to the State Legislature.

The few specific grounds on which dismissal is possible and written representations from the community will be entertained can be clearly spelt out in the Bill. The grounds can include:

Embezzlement with documentary evidence

Rape and murder

Untouchability and a case is registered under the Protection of Civil Rights Act

Keeping bonded labour and land encroachment and,

Illegal felling of trees and misuse of natural resources.

It should be mandatory under the Bill to display the voters' list on a public notice board in the Panchayat Office. It could be updated every year and open for everyone to see.

Who is the State Legislature to decide on the powers of the Gram Sabha? Yet another indirect way of confessing that the politician is scared of facing the people and would rather work through dubious intermediaries like the MLAs at the State level who should have bribed and intrigued his way through 30 to 50 sarpanches of Gram Panchayats.

What a ridiculous and outrageous suggestion that the Gram Sabhas cannot exercise any powers. They have the power to hire but they do not have the power to fire. I suppose it is easier to get to one MLA and turn than get to 50 sarpanches. Much more cost-effective and economical.

●

THE second serious flaw in the Panchayat Bill is the absence of the Eligibility Clause. Who can stand for elections at the Panchayat level? Who is qualified and who should be disqualified cannot be taken for granted. As it stands the Bill allows everyone to stand.

Here is one real chance of cleaning the system from below but we are on the verge of losing this one opportunity.

The Eligibility Clause must limit the number of times a person can stand for Sarpanch. If the duration of the Panchayat has been fixed for five years (three would be much better because then the Sarpanch has to produce results: with five he/she can relax) then the sarpanch cannot serve for more than two consecutive terms: 10 years is more than enough. With a gap of one year then he/she should be eligible once again.

This is to ensure that there is enough opportunity for an alternative leadership to grow from within the village.

The Bill must guarantee a Constitutional provision that where the percentage of the Scheduled Castes/Tribes and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in a village. Panchayat is more than 40 per cent the village leaders must also come from this category. This is not to say that SC/STs have leaders who do not exploit their own castes but in this case the eligibility clause will provide protection that it does not become a family concern.

Its time we changed our attitudes and stopped spoon-feeding people at the village level. They have sharp, clear minds of their own and know exactly what they want and need. To treat them like idiots and half-wits is grossly underestimating their knowledge and ability to take collective decisions without interference. Getting the State Legislature to decide for Gram Panchayats is an insult to their intelligence.

Unless the idea is to use the Gram Panchayats as a front to legitimise criminal activity at the State level, regularise wastage and leakage of funds. at the panchayat level in the name of development and give it some sanctity.

In which case the Bill is perfect. ■

(Courtesy. *Indian Express*)

MEDIA

Challenge before Television in India

CHANCHAL SARKAR

The British Labour leader Ernest Bevin was the sworn and implacable enemy of another well-known labour figure, Aneurin Bevan. In the House of Commons Bevan was one of the finest debaters but Bevan held that whenever his enemy spoke it was nothing but "clich clich clich".

I, too, am going to begin with oversized clich. It is: "In Indian broadcasting we stand tiptoe at the edge of an era of change of rending and buckling change."

The change, and the challenge, that comes in lock-step with it is due to the developments in satellite broadcasting. These have been known for quite some time. In a moderate way India has been experimenting with space technology for years. There hasn't in fact been any thought through response to the development – only some stitched up, *ad interim*, ad hoc proposals leaked to the press in driblets, none of them has yet been put to work.

But before talking about any evolving Asian culture – spurred by satellite footprints and continental viewing – we should ask if we know the scale, intensity and nature of the option on offer from abroad. It has always been very difficult to gauge realistically the viewing of Doordarshan and breakup of the viewing because that organisation has, I think, never engaged an outside agency for assessment. The number of Indians taking cable television and the plans and dreams for India of STAR, CNN, etc., are known. Even if one chips away the sales pitch the thrust is like that of the world's multinationals with a lot of money to spend because of the expectation of recking in much more.

The writer, who is a well-known media specialist, addressed the Broadcast Engineering Society, India (September 1991), out of which the present contribution is made.

In some developed countries television has reached the point of saturation. Britain, for instance, where the number of TV sets, 36 million, exceeds the number of households, 22million, by a large margin. Faced by a saturated market British Television, with a yearly turnover of three billion (that is to say, Rs 18,000 crores) must look to the outside world for expansion. This outward urge is true of some other countries as well and, in a competitive world, there is a lot of rate cutting. STAR, for instance, puts a lot of Australian programmes because they, and American, are cheaper. Some American serials cost a user £ 7000 an hour. A quality British programme would cost for £ 35,000-60,000 an hour for repeat rights. The American can afford to 'dump' programmes for next to nothing, and they do.

Faced with the multiple choice at the end of a button what will the Indian viewer watch? It is probably self-delusion to say that people will get tired of the stuff from space and fall back into the arms of Auntie Doordarshan. Certainly not Auntie as she is today. What people want, and will get from satellite TV is lashing of entertainment — serials with love and romance or rapid gunfire, pop and rock, lots of sports, films, fashion shows, crime and espionage, travel and adventure and programmes about consumer goods.

It is out of this mix that the new Asian culture will be fashioned. Only, it will not be Asian culture as such but a mish-mash that the young everywhere in the world has clutched on to and will never let go. Language doesn't matter in pop and rock, in sport and fashion or in much of travel and adventure. Even people with faltering English can squeeze meaning out of overseas serials (remember the success of Dynasty and Dallas which were among the most watched programmes in Taiwan and Mexico and even in Bangladesh?) And the faltering watchers might not have to do that for long. Japanese serials on view in Thailand, Hong Kong or Malaysia are dubbed into Thai, English, Chinese or Malay and (any number of audio channels) are already available.

The cultural modes which are exclusive will remain exclusive. Chinese opera, Indonesian Wayang Kulit or Indian Kathakali will not overnight become the rage elsewhere. They need language, a scaffolding of traditional knowledge and a special taste. I doubt if these modes can be painlessly transmitted elsewhere but apart from language-free things like sport, audio channels, dubbing and press-button interpretation will make many more satellite programmes acceptable to Indian listeners.

Does Doordarshan then face annihilation? What menu must the Metro channel plonk on the table? Nobody has precise answers but the formula must revolve round entertainment, stretching maybe to 'infotainment. Looking at Doordarshan's ad-revenue of Rs 345 crores a year the ad-people know the elementary fact that the biggest national draw is Chitrahaar and then Hindi films which together net about 19 per cent of the total ad-money. Advertisers, sponsors and programme-makers scan these figures like hawks. They will also study what Indians watch from abroad.

A report covering adolescents in Italy, elderly in the US and Canadian and American adults found that only about three per cent of them watched the News. This suggests that there will be few News-based programmes in the new offerings. Does this mean that quality programmes, minority programmes as they are often called, have no future and will not be part of the cultural spectrum?

This question is related to one which has surfaced in several countries where broadcasting is widespread and powerful. It was answered best, I think, by Newton Minow perhaps the most well-known of the Chairmen of America's Federal Communications Commission. In 1961 Minow made a speech where he called American Television the "great wasteland". In 1991, thirty years later, in another speech he said that he was deeply disappointed that his 1961 speech was remembered only for those two words because he had wanted it to be remembered by two other words also in that speech. Those were "public interest".

Minow went on to describe the TV scene in the United States since 1961. From 47.2 million the number of sets had more than tripled to 172 million in 1990. Cable TV, which had served just over a million homes has reached 55 million. From 2.18 hours Americans watched TV for 7.3 hours a day. Advertising revenue was up from 1.2 billion to 24 billion cable subscriptions 51 million then, were 20 billion.

As I said, Minow didn't want to be remembered by the "great wasteland"."To me", he added, "the public interest meant, and still means, that we should constantly ask: What can television do for our country? For the common good? For the American people? "

We have failed, he went on, to use television for education, to use television for children, and to finance public television properly.

Now isn't that exactly the same with us ? Not quite, for we have never known public interest television. Although the government has often called it "public", Indian television has been very private — put out for the benefit of the government and the ruling party no matter what the complexion of the government and the party.

●

WHEN talking about quality programmes in the atmosphere of the commercial siege which is to be anticipated, there is reason to remember Canada. Wide open to continuous electronic bombardment from the United States, Canada has striven hard to maintain a distinct identity. Whether it has succeeded is an open question but, in the process, and despite financial cuts, it has produced some of the world's best programmes, and some splendid broadcasters and film-makers.

So there is a glimmer of hope. Only a glimmer, mind, because the Government of India and its Ministry of Information and Broadcasting seem to have been reduced to taking a purely commercial view, calculating how much money Doordarshan and the Metro Channel will bring in. To this end they are willing to sacrifice scruples like cross-ownership and don't seem to have applied their minds to public interest television. Ultimately it is money which is likely to rule programmes — money from sponsors and advertisers and money from the film-world. In this scrabble game no one will use the counters to make up words like "quality", experimentation or "creativity".

Will this enthusiastic surrender to the market place, this eagerness to give the public what it wants, this understanding of television that it is a cake stuffed full of entertainment cherries with maybe a thin icing of News keep Indian television standing in the flood of satellite programmes or will it be swept away?

This is a question impossible to answer because the uncertain factors are too many. Some suggest that instead of trying to meet the competition from outside head-on the best strategy would be to make the foreign programmes part of Indian TV, to enter into arrangements of collaboration and exchange with the companies abroad, to be partners and divide the labour and the lolly. What the terms of such arrangements will be it is not easy to foretell but, in their quest for Indian viewers and Indian advertising, the companies abroad may be willing to enter into contracts. But if Indian television, till now so stunted and neglected and so distanced from education and the political process is to have any tryst with quality and with culture then it must have a spine of public interest television and not put everything into private hands. Please remember that everywhere in the world, and perhaps notably in India, there is evidence that traditional checks,ethical and social,on private behaviour have been rubbed thin.

Of the satellite programmes leaving aside CNN which deals only with News of various kinds, not always of interest to the overseas viewer, the BBC is most genuinely successful with its News and News-based programmes. India's outlook on News was analysed not long ago in a worldwide study which drew interesting maps of continents and countries showing what the world looked like to them from the way their TV covered news. Japan, for instance, devoted 78 per cent of its attention time to itself. China's range was surprisingly wide, but India's concerns, too, were mainly with itself. This partly explains one of the greatest failures of Indian broadcasting in the last 50 years. It threw away the opportunity of setting up first ever radio and then TV, a worldwide alternative news service, covering and interpreting events from the Third World point of view. Properly conceived and run, it would have gained immense prestige for India and become a reference point of credibility.

Television is about programmes. That much is gospel. But there can never be good programmes without sound business management and a competent grasp of technology. The President of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation puts it like this: "Canada has attempted to marry two distanctly different approaches the hard-headed sharp-pencilled perspective of the Corporate Section.... alongwith the visionary programmes and broadcasters who have given Canada an outstanding international reputation." India will not be able to broadcast for culture or have a'broadcast culture' unless it combines those two elements with a technological grasp.

This is a lesson which the print media learnt quite some time ago.The world's most influential and effective editors today are not those who write banderilla paragraphs but these who combine editorial skill and planning with managerial and financial knowledge, topped with and understanding of technology.

Advances in technology proclaim that casts by way of Direct Broadcast Satellites can now be received on ordinary television sets with inbuilt antennae. Dishes are no longer necessary. This is already true for the laboratory and will soon be for the marketplace. What is the implication for culture and life if programmes from the world over can be in Indian homes at the flip of a switch?

If it means mayhem for the minds of Indian citizens then is the answer to censor them wholly or selectively? Apparently this can be done by an alteration of design. But doesn't the history of the last 20 years declare against that line of thought? The Soviet Union and its satellite countries in Eastern Europe tried to control Information and Culture from abroad and even from within. In the USSR a person or an office could not even set up a copying machine without permission .

. Radio, Television and the Press were strictly controlled. With what result? Information and cultural influences seeped in and riddled the whole edifice of control until it crumbled like a house of cards. By an ironic turn of the wheel the very transmitters used by the Soviets to jam the BBC are now being hired by the BBC to relay its World Service to India and China! One of the few countries where strict control still persists is North Korea. Is India going to make North Korea its mentor?

With the arrogance of size and, even more, of population, India's policy-makers in Communication might think Indian broadcasting has an automatic teaching and preaching role in Culture. Those who think so might ask what has India's most popular cultural export,the Bombay film contributed to the many countries where it is screened? One might also ask if, after 57 years of radio and 34 of television, the sum total of their cultural contribution is either remarkable or adequate? Going further, one could ask if the institution of broadcasting in India deserves to adopt a teaching role in relation to the rest of the subcontinent and continent?

Let us be clear. After the struggle to free broadcasting from the overlordship of bureaucracy and officialdom, is it to be handed over to the money-changers at the Temple? Be they sponsors, advertisers or producers are the electronic media to be laid open for their milking? Is there to be no room for public interest broadcasting?

A most thoughtful approach to an answer was from the late Professor Hilde Himmelweit. A very distinguished social scientist, she was a member of the Annan Commission and several other committees on broadcasting. In 1972 she wrote:"There has been a shift of emphasis from considering the broadcast media solely in terms of the programmes they produce to one in which the BBC and the ITA are seen as powerful institutions in their own right whose style of decision-making and action profoundly affect the community. It is this view that has led to the demand for public accountability and for increased participation and access." That in short,is the case for broadcasting in the public interest.

India's broadcasting institutions, I'm afraid,are very far from having attained the sort of stature she described. They won't do so by a waving of the magic wand of Prasar Bharati over them. Excellence in broadcasting, influence and freedom emerge from the slow acceleration of history. But they cannot emerge if they do not safeguard the interest of the public. ■

Fourth Estate or Fifth Column

JOHN TUSA

The term 'fourth estate' originated in a speech of Edmund Burke in the British Parliament towards the end of the eighteenth century. He noted the various estates of the realm: the Lords Spiritual, the Lords Temporal and the Commons – the powers that hold in their hands the ultimate destiny of British governments. Then Burke added, pointing to the press gallery: 'And yonder sits the Fourth Estate, more important than them all.'

The phrase 'fifth column' was first used by the fascist General Mola, who said, during the Spanish Civil War in October 1936, that he was commanding five columns in the assault on Madrid; four converging on the city from various directions 'and the fifth column within the city'. It was Ernest Hemingway's use of the phrase in a play called *The Fifth Column* which established it permanently in the language. The term means civilians subversively working in a clandestine fashion to undermine a regime or a state from within.

The idea of the media as the fourth estate, with its explicit connotation of a legitimate place in the constitution of the country, is flattering. The idea of the media as a fifth column is quite the reverse. Both cannot be true. I have yoked them together in an attempt to face the reality that while a public commitment to freedom of expression, and freedom of activity for the media, is general throughout the world – a commitment more honoured in the breach than in the observance-the acknowledgement that the media should have a quasi-legitimate constitutional position is weaker than it should be. The allowance that if the media do have such a position, then they deserve to have it, is weaker still.

Despite his admission that the standing of the media – national or international – is not what it should be, I shall argue:

> that free press is essential to a healthy democracy-indeed is a condition of it;
>
> that governemnts and journalists have different objectives and that tension between them is inevitable;
>
> that the right to criticise and expose exercised by the press in a democracy carries a corresponding responsibility;
>
> that bad governments are far worse for their citizens than even the worst media.

For a century, the power of the printed word has been clear for all to see. W.T. Stead, the Editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, wrote to his father in 1883,'Here I am, not yet 35, and already the most influential man in England.'

John Tusa is the Managing Director of the BBC World Service. This is the text of a speech delivered to the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, Lagos, on November 12, 1991

Such status has not been granted to all journalists, nor to all organs of the press. It is said that a group of journalists were once introduced to a minister by his private secretary with the words,'Minister, the press and the Gentleman from the *Times*'. In the 1960s, Harold Macmillan, the most quasi-aristocratic of Britain's leaders, was asked what he thought of the press. He replied that they were all very well but they were 'hardly the kind of people you would ask to the country for the weekend'.

The new broadcasting media, taking their cue from the press from which their journalistic skills and outlook originally derived, initially adopted a posture of absurd deference to ministers. In 1951, the British Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, was interviewed for television on his return from the United States. Attlee was a man of few words at the best of times:

> **Interviewer:** Good morning, Mr Attlee. We hope you've had a good journey.
>
> **Attlee:** Yes, excellent.
>
> **Interviewer:** Can you, now you're back having cut short your lecture tour, tell us something of how you view the election prospects?
>
> **Attlee:** Oh, we shall go in and have a good fight. A very good chance of winning. We shall go in confidently, we always do.
>
> **Interviewer:** And on what will Labour take its stand?
>
> **Attlee:** Well, that we'll be announcing shortly.
>
> **Interviewer:** What are your immediate plans, Mr Attlee?
>
> **Attlee:** My immediate plan is to go down to a committee and decide on just that thing, as soon as I can get away from here.
>
> **Interviewer:** Anything else you'd care to say about the coming election?
>
> **Attlee:** No.

We have advanced a good deal since then, whatever the difficulties we experience from time to time. The main objection to that interview – both to its questions and to its answers – is that it tells the audience, the democratic voters, absolutely nothing.

A still more celebrated instance of the stone wall interview occurred in 1962. The BBC Commonwealth Correspondent, Douglas Brown, met Malawi's Nationalist leader, Dr Hastings Banda, on his arrival at London airport on June 21, 1962. This is how the interview, preserved to this day in the BBC's archives, ran:

> **Brown:** Have you come here to ask the Secretary of State for a firm date for Nyasaland independence?
>
> **Banda:** I won't tell you that.
>
> **Brown:** When do you hope to get independence?
>
> **Banda:** I won't tell you that
>
> **Brown:** Dr Banda, when you get independence are you as determined as ever to break away from Central African Federation?
>
> **Banda:** Need you ask me that question at this stage?
>
> **Brown:** Well, this stage is as good as any other stage, why do you ask why I shouldn't ask you this question at this stage?
>
> **Banda:** Haven't I said enough for everybody to be convinced that I mean just that?
>
> **Brown:** Dr Banda, if you break with the Central African Federa-

> tion, how will you make out economically? After all, your country isn't really a rich country...
>
> **Banda:** Don't ask me that. Leave that to me.
>
> **Brown:** But which way is your mind working?
>
> **Banda:** Which way? I won't tell you that.
>
> **Brown:** Where do you hope to get economic aid from?
>
> **Banda:** I won't tell you that.
>
> **Brown:** Are you going to tell me anything?
>
> **Banda:** Nothing.

By the 1970s, the role of the microphone interviewer as the deferential handmaiden of the interviewee had been altered. The former British Ambassador to Uruguay, Sir Geoffrey Jackson, one of the first victims of modernday kidnapping at the hands of the Tupamaros in 1971, wrote of the change in the role of the reporters:

> Before the war, I had been drilled to an instant evasive reflex if the press ever hove into sight. Only the mighty ever confronted those coffin-like microphones of the early radio; television did not even exist to panic us. A decade later, we were to run with outstretched hand to meet the press. On tour from overseas headquarters we were not to shrink from the intrusive hand-mike, or to wince at the inevitable question, "What does it feel like...?"

The idea that the media are troublesome to diplomats and politicians is long-standing. It spreads across governments of all shades, both democratic and totalitarian. The Emperor Napoleon once said that 'four newspapers are more to be feared than a thousand bayonets'. There is a Russian joke which has Napoleon saying to Stalin that if he had a newspaper like *Pravda*, nobody would ever have known of his defeat at Waterloo in 1815. Clearly the French—great believers in the importance of central authority—continue to have a cautious view of what to do with the media. In the early 1960s, President de Gaulle asked President Jack Kennedy, 'How can you control your country if you do not control television?' Many American Presidents since must have asked themselves that very question.

What is implict in those questions is the view on the part of government that the media are at best a nuisance, at worst dangerous, and that they should be subject to state regulation, control or manipulation; but it is—for the most part—only implicit. Others present a view of the imperative need to regulate the media in a more direct way. That theoretician and practitioner of the control of the state power, Lenin, declared his highly qualified view of press freedom in 1920: 'Publishing enterprises must not be permitted to abuse their autonomy by pursuing a policy that is not entirely Party policy.'

Information, communication and comment are, according to Lenin, too important to be left to the merely bourgeois so-called freedoms of the press and, by natural extension, the electronic media. But you do not have to be an autocratic ideologue such as Lenin, to raise questions about the role of the media. That extraordinary Russian religious nationalist and anti-Communist dissident, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, mused:

> The press has become the greatest power within Western countries; more powerful than the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. One would like to ask: by what law has it been elected and to whom is it responsible?

Let me take three cases where government and an element of the media have clashed head-on and examine what both sides said at the time. In 1852, the *Times*, then truly deserving of its name The Thunderer, was engaged in a headon clash with that most buccaneering of British Foreign Secretaries, the founder of gunboat diplomacy himself, Lord Palmerston. Defending his minister, the Prime Minister, Lord Derby, gave the *Times* a sharp pull on the reins. He did not like the sight of newspapers telling his Foreign Secretary how to run foreign policy. According to Lord Derby:

> As in these days the English Press aspires to share the influences of statesmen so also must it share in the responsibilities of statesmen.

The challenge is clear enough: if you want to meddle in these affairs, then you must become part of them. The then leader writer of the *Times*, Robert Lowe, replied at length and in detail. He conceded that if the first part of Lord Derby's proposition were true—that the press wanted to have the same influence as ministers—then the second—that it should accept the same responsibilities as ministers—would certainly follow. But Lowe did not accept Derby's proposition about the relationship between what he called the two powers, the government and the press:

> The purposes and duties of the two powers are constantly separate, generally independent, sometimes diametrically opposite. The dignity and the freedom of the Press are trammelled from the moment it accepts an ancillary position. To perform its duties with entire independence, and consequently with the utmost public advantage, the Press can enter into no close or binding alliances with the statesmen of the day, nor can it surrender its permanent interests to the convenience of the ephemeral power of any Government.

The following day, the *Times* returned to the theme as it certainly deserved. My own response to the extract that follows is that I wish I had known about it earlier in my present job. It defines precisely the area of tension which exists between the BBC World Service's broadcasting and journalistic imperatives today and the equally valid, but functionally different, imperatives of any British Foreign Office. Writing in 1852, the *Times* declared that the press must roam freely over topics that men of action dare not touch. (I would add that there is nothing wrong about this, nothing disreputable about a plain difference of function.) The *Times* went on:

> Government must treat other Governments with external respect, however bad their origin or foul their deeds; but happily the Press is under no such trammels, and while diplomatists are exchanging courtesies, can unmask the mean heart that beats beneath a star, or point out the bloodstains on the hand which grasps a sceptre. The duty of the journalist is the same as that of the historian—to seek out truth, above all things and to present his readers not such things as statecraft would wish them to know but the truth as near as he can attain it... To require, then, the journalist and the statesman to conform to the same rules is to mix up things essentially different, and is as unsound in theory as unheard of in practice.

I believe the *Times* was right then and its conclusions are still valid today. If the responsibilities of the media are no different from the responsibilities of the government then you need no media at all, but merely the activities of a Ministry of Information. But to purvey information to the public on such a basis is to perpetrate a fraud on the citizens – they are not receiving independent reporting but a partial and self-serving view of events-and ultimately leads to the government believing its own propaganda untramelled by any counterbalancing point of view. That is no sort of formula for good government and more and more countries are coming to realise it.

One of the most celebrated clashes between the media and the government in recent times came over the Vietnam War in the USA. The Nixon Administration, trying to extricate the USA from a disastrous war which was losing any support it had had among the American people decided it must attack the instrument that was helping the steady loss of credibility of administration policy, the TV network news shows. The person chosen for this selective strike on the media was Vice-President Spiro Agnew, who later pleaded guilty to income tax evasion, was fined $10,000 and put on probation for three years.

In 1969 he launched into a general attack on what he called the television establishment:'A small group of men numbering perhaps no more than a dozen "anchormen" commentators, and executive producers', who 'live and work in the geographical and intellectual confines of Washington, DC, or New York City', and whose capacity for choosing what 40 to 50 million people learned each day through television concerning national and international affairs represented ' a concentration of power over American public opinion unknown in history'.

Agnew ignored the fact that the three network news shows were in deadly competition with one another, that their search for a competitively different journalistic line was hardly conducive to sharing the same line, and that the public could, as they have often done, vote with their switches.

Agnew personalised his attack on one correspondent in particular, Daniel Schorr of the CBS News. He and others, claimed the Vice- President, made up 'a tiny, enclosed fraternity of privileged men elected by no one and enjoying a monopoly sanctioned and licensed by government'.

It is curious that Alexander Solzhenitsyn and Spiro Agnew – surely with nothing else in common – share one query:'Who elects the media?" Schorr was very direct in his reply to the Agnew attacks. The argument was not only a matter of principle; it was undoubtedly a matter of power:

> I think we've come to the point where big concentrations of power can be controlled only by other big concentrations of power. Just as it would take the federal government to control the oil industry, which even its power hasn't succeeded in doing yet, so it takes big news organisations to stand up to big government, with a lot of power. That's what the *Washington Post* had and needed, and that's what the networks have and need.

But the issue of the distribution of power itself conceals a major issue of principle. In a democracy, power is diffused; in the USA, it is formally separated. The power of the media is one way of creating a necessary alternative counter to what would otherwise be an overconcentration of power. In the course of the controversy over the TV networks' coverage of the Vietnam War, in July 1970, Frank Stanton, President of the CBS, made a speech in Utah warning that the delicate mechanism governing the interaction between the government and a reasonably well-informed public might be thrown out of balance "if the words and views of the President become a monolithic force, if they constitute not just the powerful voice in the land but the only one speaking for a nationwide point of view'.

Stanton was stating a basic principle. All leaders hope that they speak for the people, that they articulate the hopes, dreams, wishes of a nation. If they are great leaders, that is exactly what they must try to do, and sometimes manage to do. But they cannot take the achievement for granted. They must earn it. And they cannot snatch it by suppressing all those inconvenient voices which call their claims to be the sole, unchallenged national voice into question. The media are inconvenient; they get in the way. But they do so not just because they are congenitally members of the awkward squad but because national leaders need to have their claims to unquestioning legitimacy, to be the sole arbiters of their nation's destiny, subjected to test.

Surely this assertion hardly needs testing itself. Modern history is littered with instances of leaders who claimed to speak for their people and then killed those who challenged that right. The magnitude of their failure is matched only by the scale of their presumption and the size of the tragedy they visited on their people:

My name is Ozymandius, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!
(Percy Bysshe Shelley)

Who has killed more people throughout the twentieth century? The most mendacious ruler, unchallenged by the media? Or the most exploitative media baron, unregulated by a government? In such a contest, the only one that matters, there is no contest.

But the argument will not rest there. What responsibility does the media have to the state? Some journalists think the press has no responsibility whatsoever to the authorities that are in place. The press, is answerable, says this school of thought, only to its readers, or audience.

Lord Annan, the distinguished British academic who was the chairman of the official enquiry into broadcasting in the UK in March 1977, maintains that the state must be brought into the picture:

> It is the legal expression of the nation; repository of sovereignty, sole source of legal cohesion; source of authority of the armed forces; agent of law.

For Annan the state is

> quite different from the government. It is different, incidentally, also from the Establishment. The state is our nation: Monarchy, Parliament, Judiciary, Ministers. It is the entity which demands our loyalty, which the government has no right to demand except of course from the members of a political party who belong to it. Each of us owes duties to the state because it is the state which defines and sustains our rights through the laws of the country. And it demands our loyalty because, through the armed forces and the police, it alone can defend us from invasion or anarchy.

As the leading news-provider, the BBC, says Annan, 'cannot be impartial when British soldiers are in action and suffering casualties against the aggressor'.

Annan goes on to emphasise the onus on the powerful media, radio and television:

> Broadcasters owe a duty to the state. Broadcasters should remember that they owe a duty to the reputations of politicians Statements which "discredit not merely the politicians but the whole concept of government, without which a society cannot exist", destroy public confidence in the nation in a peculiarly 'poisonous way'.

I recognise the argument but I question its validity. What should the broadcaster do if the very foundation of the state is unjust? In asking the question, I do not arrogate to the broadcaster/journalist the duty to question constantly the justice of the foundations of the state. As Lord Annan put it, there is something very British, very settled, very smug about the dichotomy between the government—whose actions should be monitored—and the state whose basis guarantees us, the British, our very freedoms. Of course, a state which gives its citizens its basic freedoms, including freedom of expression both public and private, deserves and requires a special respect.

But even before the democracy movement in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union and now in Africa, it was clear that there were many states which made claims to give their citizens fundamental rights, but who did nothing of the kind in practice. What kind of duty does the broadcaster owe to a state which not only does not guarantee basic rights but actually violates them? Must the broadcaster bend the knee to an entity merely because it calls itself a state and thereby puts itself onto a higher plane of being in the rarified world of political theory? According to this view, the Soviet Union, the state of Stalin's purges, of Brezhnevite stagnation, of massive historic oppression and injustice, should not have been challenged because it was the state. The media have no choice but to ask questions about the government of the day or the state of the moment, not because they are special, not because they are better, not because they are arrogant, but because if they do not do it, no one else will. No one else, that is to say, until the people themselves, their spirits freed by the prior releasing of their media, take matters into their own hands as they did in the velvet revolution of Eastern Europe in 1989.

So what is the responsibility of the journalist? It is to report evenly, accurately, to tell the truth. Democracy is a hollow word unless those who exercise their right to vote have the facts on which to base their choice at the ballot-box. The great British writer on the Constitution, Walter Bagehot, warned:

> Knowledge will forever govern ignorance. And a people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the proper power that knowledge gives. A popular government without a popular information or the means of acquiring it, is but a prologue to a farce or tragedy, or perhaps both.

During a recent trip to Czechoslovakia, I heard the director of Czechoslovak Radio, Frantisek Pavlicek, apologise to his people for allowing lies to be told to them over the years:

> I am sorry I ask you to accept this apology. I ask you to forgive us for all the lies, insult and odium.

In Eastern Eurpoe, we are seeing today the result of four decades of systematic deception on the part of the governments who used journalists as their tools. Some hid reality from their audiences for the best, in their eyes, motives. These were idealists who thought that only a totalitarian system could transform their societies. Rather more did so out of cynicism and self-interest. During those years the BBC and other Western radio stations were jammed, at enormous cost. But many still managed to listen.

A great illusion holds the censors and the regulators in thrall: the conviction that if one prevents an awkward fact from being printed or broadcast, one's people will not, somehow, find it out. In today's world, with the growth in communication, it is even more inevitable that an increasing number will learn that which the state does not want them to know.

The influential American columnist, Walter Lippmann, wrote:

> The theory of a free press is that the truth will emerge from free reporting and discussion—not that it will be presented perfectly and instantly in any one account

As Lippmann realised, the path to truth is an arduous one and many stumble on the way. It needs single-minded devotion on the part of the prospector. He or she cannot serve another cause at the same time, such as being a propagandist for the state, a party or a cause.

But to make a single mistake or even several, does not undermine the argument for independent journalism. It merely shows that the participant is human, not that what they are trying to do is invalid. Repeated errors of a pre-ordained and deliberate kind are very different. 'To err is human, to forgive divine'. But, as George Bernard Shaw wrote: 'To err is human, to persevere diabolical.' Lippmann recognised that it is the process of honest inquiry that matters. For the process itself, if honestly undertaken and honestly maintained, will produce a decent result, despite the errors, the moments off balance, the nit-picking. The process is far greater than the challenge which calls it into question.

●

ONE of my BBC colleagues, Colin Morris, a great Methodist preacher, has graphically sketched the conditions under which the broadcaster works:

> In the Book of Genesis, it is God who brings order out of chaos, in the modern world, television journalists have to make a stab at doing it They subdue into harmony a mountain of telex printouts, miles of video tape and a pandemonium of ringing telephones They organise into a coherent picture a riot of impressions, a chaos of events, a bedlam of attitudes and opinions that would otherwise send us scurrying to the hills in a panic. And they have to construct this world view at lightning speed, in a welter of instant judgements Not for them the luxury afforded to philosophers of earlier ages who could reflect at leisure on the fitness of things Aristotle had no six o'clock deadline to meet.

The work of the journalist is, in a fundamental sense, religious, says Morris:

Is not the word " religion" derived from a Latin root, *religare*, "to tie together" or " to bind"? And is not this what the journalist does as he or she knits together verbal and visual symbols into some semblance of reality?

My old and distinguished colleague was undoubtedly overstating the case. Even in our most optimistic moments, broadcasters would not in the main argue that our function is quasi-religious except in the amusingly philological sense used by Colin Morris. But we would argue that the activity of the media gives a cohesion to society, a cohesion based on freely delivered information easily received, and consent to government openly granted, leading to a more decent society.

I am well aware that these claims do not resonate with recent African theory, experience or inclination. Governments feel weak rather than strong, threatened by tribal rivalries, economic failure, ideological disputes, religious tensions. In such an atmosphere, the response has been to demand of the journalist/broadcaster in Africa that he/she should indeed live up to the definition offered by Colin Morris – should bind the nation together – and that criticism, dissent, investigation, all the customary activities of the media should take second place to the primary need of national unity.

As Paul Ansah of the University of Ghana wrote in the *Index on Censorship* in October 1991:

> African governments find it necessary to control broadcasting operation in order to promote national unity, socio economic development and stability. It is felt that if control is not exercised, there is the danger of the system falling into the hands of a group of wealthy people who could use it to promote commercial, sectional or political interests that may be at variance with national objectives.

President Kaunda, who has just set an example of the democratic process at work, said in 1968:

> The international press qualifies as one of the many invisible governments. The press is capable of making or destroying governments given appropriate conditions, it can cause war or create conditions for peace It can promote development or create difficulties in the way of development.

That is an inflated idea of the power of the Western media. It confuses cause and consequence, but it shows the concern and suspicion with which many African leaders view it.

That pioneer of independent rule, Kwame Nkrumah, was preoccupied with the role of the media in his new state. Nkrumah maintained that the press must be under party and government control. His was a Leninist view of the function of the journalist.

In the capitalist media the writer 'finds himself rejecting or destroying facts that do not coincide with the outlook and interest of his employer or the medium's advertisers... trivialities are blown up, the vulgar emphasised, ethics forgotten, the important trimmed to the class outlook'.

Nkrumah saw a newspaper as"

> a collective organiser, a collective instrument of mobilisation and a collective educator – a weapon, first and foremost to overthrow colonialism and to assist total African independence and unity. The true African journalist very often works for the cause of the political party to which he himself belongs and in whose purpose he believes. He works to serve a society moving in the direction of his aspirations

There are many in Africa who argue that the press has a special role in addition to the tasks of informing and entertaining. For these people, continues Paul Ansah:

> The press in a developing country is expected to help forge a sense of national unity, identity and integration and to mobilise the people for development. Many leaders in developing countries also consider that it is their responsibility to provide information to citizens as a social service in the same way as they provide other services such as educational, health and recreational facilities.

It was interesting to see what Swaziland's acting Minister of the Interior, Senator Wilson Mkhonta, said in October 1991:

> Africans should be made to trust their own media so as to avoid the necessity to tune into foreign radio stations in order to learn what is happening in their own countries.

Let me say that I do not see how there can be two different codes of journalistic ethics. A higher set of editorial standards for the developed world and a looser discipline for the developing nations seems to me to be ultimately unacceptable. It is as dangerous to accept such a differentiation as it would be to set different standards for surgeons or aircraft maintenance. It is patronising on the part of the West, defeatist on the side of the Third World. It is a disservice to those who look to the media for a true picture of events, and it is harmful to the democratic process. It handicaps young talent and blights the lives of those who try to report honestly.

A free press is the mark of a confident nation; an accurate press is the sign of a mature people; a press which can criticise governments temperately, and governments which react rationally to such criticism, are evidence of a civilised state.

Arrest warrants for editors who point to the gap between words and deeds expose frightened rulers. The response to media which trivialise and sensationalise is best left to their audience.

Finally, in defence of my order, let me quote once more from that robust apologia for the fourth estate written by Robert Lowe in the *Times* 140 years ago:

> The first duty of the Press is to obtain the earliest and most correct intelligence of the events of the time, and instantly, by disclosing them, to make them the common property of the nation. The statesman collects his information secretly and by secret means, he keeps back even the current intelligence of the day with ludicrous precautions, until diplomacy is beaten in the race with publicity

I find it enormously heartening that a defence of freedom of information made almost 150 years ago still resounds with such strength and relevance today. It suggests to me that the principles which I have tried to articulate are well-rooted in soil so eloquently dug over by Robert Lowe.

For us, to whom publicity and truth are the air and light of existence, there can be no greater disgrace than to recoil from the frank and accurate disclosure of facts as they are. We are bound to tell the truth as we find it, without fear of consequences – to lend no convenient shelter to acts of injustice and oppression, but to consign them at once to the judgement of the world.

(Courtesy *Index on Censorship*)

COMMUNICATION

Ragging : Culture Defiled

I have read with interest the writing of Prof Gargi Chakravartty—"Ragging and Cultural Decadence" in *Mainstream* (September 19,1992) that has reached me only this morning.

My own experience is indicated in this letter.

I joined the Dhaka Collage in 1919 and my direct association with Dhaka University continued till 1946, when I left Dhaka for my fresh assignment in New Delhi.

The resident students were treated with unreserved affection and the renowned teachers—Dr Gnan Chandra Ghosh, Prof Satyen Bose, Dr Ramesh Mazumdar, Dr N.C. Sen Gupta—nurtured us collectively like a bunch of fragrant flowers. There was no form of favoured treatment of the special batches of learners and the newcomers were accepted as young brothers by seniormost Research Scholars, in Science and Arts. We took bath in the attached big tank together and took daily meals in the same dining hall, with no seats reserved for senior scholars. The community life was slowly taking shape because of the guidance of Hostel Superintendents and the psychic factors worked a lot. No question of disorderly behaviour and the ugly manifestation of sadism had ever been allowed to disturb our fraternity-banded together by sincere feeling of brotherhood.

I left Dhaka University and joined the renowned institution, Brajomohan College, Barisal,—where co-education had been introduced from the very beginning—with the largest number of students in Calcutta University, outside the metropolitan city.

I never felt uneasy and troubled on any occasion—so long I continued teaching thousands of students for few years, before my arrest and confinements in Barisal jail in 1942.

The perverse and petrified way of life—that has crept into our body politic has imperceptively influenced the young learners—now grappling hard to attain recognition amongst the neo-elites. And the culture is debased and defiled. The teachers have no reason to disown blemish and continue to stand aloof, when dangerous signs are made abundantly visible.

Believing in the triumph of commonsense, strengthened by realistic study—I assure the teachers that they are sure to root out this malady—once they decide not to tolerate perversion. The students will stand behind them in such healthy venture.

October 3,1992

P.R. Chakraverti
Former Member of Parliament

Kanthapota,
Krishnagar,
Dt. Nadia, W. Bengal-741101

JOSEPH : KERALA

(Continued from page 14)

districts to the regional pockets in the south. This growing political influence of Muslim League created resentment among sections of the Hindu population,especially the Nairs. It led to the emergence of the Hindu communal group,the RSS, making its hold in Kerala. The BJP has gained access in electoral politics too since the 1980s. In the 1982 election the BJP-Hindu Munnani combine contested 69 seats and won 2.75 per cent of votes. The recent Ram Janmabhoomi Babri Masjid controversy and the subsequent Ekta Yatra added strength to its cadres in the local areas.

ISS and minority communalism

In December 1982, Trivandrum witnessed anti-Muslim riots. Tensions were also built on the 'Nilakkal Controversy' over the disputed site of a church between the Hindus and Christians. But it eventually subsided. Liberation theology-related movements and changes are fast taking place within Christian religion.

The Muslim community on the other hand,still stands educationally backward and economically weak. Thus recently Islamic Sevak Sangh (ISS) emerged as a counterpart of the RSS. Its founder is the 27 year old Abdul Madani. His speeches denounce the 'Muslim League for their incapability in caring for the Muslim cause. The ISS is alleged to have been supported and funded by sources within and outside the country. It has a majority following among the youth from the southern districts of the State where Muslims live in pockets. The open support for the ISS by Muslim League supremo Ibrahim Sulaiman Sait,also had its impact on the recent riots. This is a glaring example of minority communalism and its political clout.

It is important to note that the riots occurred at a time when the ruling United Democratic Front (UDF) was riven by factional strife between Chief Minister Karunakaran and A.K.Anthony. In the events that followed, Electricity Minister Padmarajan acted as Chief Minister. The caretaker government failed to take stern action due to political factionalism and there was virtual paralysis of administration in the State.

The only solution, out of this present crisis,for Kerala is to have viable and efficient leaders,both social and political, who can highlight ideas of secularism and national pride to the different sections of the population. Modern values of democracy, nationalism, secularism have to be inculcated into the minds of the people.

The economic structure of the State needs immediate boosting, whereby industrialisation and proper channeling of foreign remittances is the need of the hour. The problem of unemployment has to be tackled at any cost. For this, a political leadership capable of bringing about such a change is essential. Otherwise, Kerala with all its problems will remain a fertile ground for subversive activities,the most probable being community-based violence. ■

SEABROOK : MARKET ECONOMY

(Continued from page 4)

market economy could have been devised for this task.

It should always be remembered that the countries of the West are also developing countries: their aim is constantly to invent new commodities, services, enterprises, products, needs and wants. This involves a double wastefulness: human resources lie neglected as the earth's resources are intensively consumed — a dual prodigality in a poor, perilously close to perishing world.

Everyone knows that, above all, India needs relief from poverty. But the path to that cannot lie in the treacherous pursuit of Western prescriptions, for these lead only to dependency, captivity, violence and ruin. India's present policies modernise poverty but do not alleviate it, streamline injustice but do not combat it, exacerbate inequality rather than redress it. If the West calls this wealth, so be it.

A decent sufficiency for all lies well within India's capacity, is within reach of its ingenious, hard-working and creative people. If at the time of independence, India had developed its own traditions of frugality, conservationism and respect for the earth, and had sought to remedy its own monstrous inequalities, the country would not now be going can in hand to the West for extortionate loans. On the contrary, the West would now be coming to India, humbly begging for aid, assistance, instruction on what it should do to achieve a self-reliant and secure life for its people.

The market must be kept in its proper, subordinate place. Limited, local and fair, it remains a neutral, useful mechanism. To look upon it as a vehicle of salvation, as the present leaders of India seem to do, is doomed; and while some lucky few might make a killing in the free markets, the real killings will, alas, not be metaphorical, as the poorest continue to yield their last breath within full sight of a global plenty denied them. ■

R.K. ROY : HAZARDS OF BEGMANSHIP

(Continued from page 5)

the consumer sm that has gripped the better-off sections of society, that is the savers.

The suspension of rational disbelief required for the pursuit of semi-tigerisation, extends to supportive foreign investment. Dismantle FERA and exchange control, free income of foreign companies from taxation, permit total alien control of ownership, do what you will, investment inflow of the required magnitude will elude India.

The average annual foreign investment in the developing countries amounted to 26 billion dollars during the period from 1986 to 1990. Of this, nine billion dollars went to Latin America, three billion dollars to Africa and 14 billion dollars to East Asia and South-East Asia. With the formation of the North American Free Trade Zone, the US and Canadian investment will flow into Mexico at the expense of investment elsewhere. The on-going normalisation in South Africa will resume foreign investment in that country. The tigers of East Asia, who have not gone to sleep, will strive to retain their share of foreign investment.

Besides, in 1990 and 1991, 34 countries made 82 changes in rules and policy to attract foreign investment. The competitive wooing will push India into getting foreign investment to replace the domestic investment that caters for the market of 200 million. That will quench the thirst of developed capitalism for new markets. But the net addition to the growth of investment, the key to India's tigerisation, will be small.

The mocking Camdessus did not need to set a government committed to begmanship on the tiger trail. The pauper tiger will declare as many industries sick as possible, proceed to kill them under the unfolding exit policy, and clear the ground for foreign investment. This government will drastically reduce import duties to promote competition, even though industry has been rendered vulnerable by continuing policy-induced haemorrhage. Foreign supplies and investment will be larger than before but smaller than is required to give a significant fillip to investment and growth. Per capita consumption will remain constrained, but will not fall unduly, so long as the IMF is willing to be humoured.

A nation can grow only on its own steam as shown by the tigers worthy of emulation. This government will take long to relise that there is more to liberalisation than looking outward. Sense will dawn only when loans begin to dry up. Before that the ballooning external debt burden will have totally sapped the nation's will and made India a basket case. ■

(Courtesy: *Indian Express*)

COMMUNICATION

Practicising Communist Norms

With reference to "Crisis of Socialism" by Randhir Singh in *Mainstream* (September 26, 1992) in which he has exhorted the Communists to cultivate communist norms and better revolutionary practice, I wish to inform him and — through your esteemed weekly — the readers that there is a "Shai-Ku-Pa" hermitage where communist norms and better revolutionary practice are actually being practised.

Intellectuals having inner urge and belief in Che Guevera's statement "Simultaneous creation of a new man with material base" may contact — Gangadhar Jha,
"Shai-Ku-Pa" Mission,
C/o M2/4 S.K. Puri,
Patna-800001.

J.P.Sinha

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Mainstream

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POLITICAL NOTEBOOK

Ominous Outburst

A very disturbing threat to the nation's integrity has come from within the leadership of the ruling party in the country.

Kerala's Chief Minister Karunakaran is a senior leader of the Congress, and has been playing an important role in the power-politics within the ruling party claiming proximity to the Prime Minister, so much so that his admirers regard him as the king-maker of the present establishment. In a recent interview, he is reported to have bitterly complained that "certain rootless North Indian politicians' are bent on finishing off the Prime Minister "in the South before capturing his post" and hence they are "fomenting trouble in the Congress States in the South".

The grave implications of such allegation are, first, there are rootless politicians in the Congress in the northern States; secondly, these northern leaders are fomenting trouble within the Congress party in the South; the ultimate objective of these northern Congress leaders is to weaken the Prime Minister's position and then to throw him out.

By Karunakaran's logic Narasimha Rao draws his strength as Prime Minister by virtue of his getting the support of the Congress in South, where the party has been ruling in three States—namely Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala. Secondly, he ascribes the surfacing of acute dissidence in the Congress ruled States in the South to the manipulations of these rootless politicians in the North.

This opens up the prospect of bitter in-fighting within the ruling Congress party, in which Karunakaran has brought in the question of mutual rivalry and suspicion between the North and the South. When Narasimha Rao became Prime Minister last year, there was certainly a feeling of pride that for the first time, the chief executive of the government of our republic has come from the South, underlining the sense of national unity. The Congress as the ruling party could certainly take credit on the occasion for having elected a distinguished leader from the South to lead the Central government of the entire country.

But Karunakaran's diatribe betrays a totally different mentality. It actually encourages narrow regional chauvinism, and makes out that Narasimha Rao's becoming Prime Minister is by virtue of the Congress strength in the South, and therefore a matter of acute jealously for the northern leaders in the Congress. In a sense, this is a blatant invitation to open factional fighting within the Congress along narrow regional lines. This is bound to provoke angry response from the Congress leaders in the North, and thereby not only intensify factional fight within the Congress but will also bring in the element of narrow regional loyalties in the outlook and functioning of the Congress leadership.

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One can of course understand that Karunakaran's outburst is perhaps the outcome of his political frustrations. He has hardly been able to rise to the eminence of a national leadership despite the seniority that he commands. Secondly, the mismanagement that is writ large in the running of the Kerala government under him has weakened the Congress party in the State, as some of the leaders within the Pradesh Congress will vouch for. Thirdly, Karunakaran could hardly win laurels by his widely known opposition to the selection of K.R. Narayanan as the Congress candidate for the post of the Vice-President of India, and the subsequent official mismanagement of Naraynan's first visit to Kerala after assumption of the august office. However, it is a dangerous game for any politician to try to cover up one's own frustrations by such diversionary moves as whipping up regional frenzy. It is possible that under pressure from responsible Congress leaders, Karunakaran may be pulled up to retract his statement.

What however is a matter of utmost concern is that the ruling party itself which claims to be national in its outlook should be harbouring within its leadership such persons who are so bereft of fealty for the nation's integrity. The Prime Minister has to realise that a thousand homilies on national integration can easily be countermanded by such ominous outburst as Karunakaran is guilty of.

The edifice of the nation's integrity already so badly battered, can hardly be safeguarded by such hollow men claiming to be in the leadership of the ruling party in this great country.

October 21 *N.C.*

Finance Minister's Bankrupt Economics

ARVIND N. DAS

Manmohan Singh must be feeling lonely nowadays. Only a few months ago there were many who eulogised him as the harbinger of India's economic transformation. Today, there are few who join that chorus.

Even in his own ministry, there is nervousness if not outright embarrassment, among his subordinates who were so *gung-ho* about their version of globalisation a few weeks ago that they chortled about getting inflation in India down to a single-digit rate and thereby signalling the success of their policies. Today, as the rate of inflation is again climbing perilously towards double digits, there is a resounding silence in the North Block

Worse for Manmohan Singh, his perceptions are being disputed even by his erstwhile political admirers On Budget day not so long ago, by drawing the red herring of the "non-leakage" of the Chelliah report across the heated parliamentary discussion on the issue of the World Bank's foreknowledge of budgetary provisions, the leader of the Opposition, L.K. Advani, has provided Singh an escape route. Today, Advani not only pointedly distances himself from Manmohan Singh's liberalisation, he even asserts that his party does not uphold capitalism.

Similarly, R. Venkataraman, who is surely familiar with fiscal facts of life since he had, as Finance Minister, negotiated an earlier IMF loan and was President of the republic when Singh repeated the exercise, has now expressed his discomfort with the effect of the dramatic shifts in economic policies that Singh has effected.

Much more significantly, P.V. Narasimha Rao himself has chosen the forum of the FICCI to pronounce his view on the scam. The Prime Minister's assessment is quite different from that of his Finance Minister: the former sees the scam as a serious phenomenon, the latter pooh-poohs it as having been overblown by the media.

Indeed, there is much in the scam that reveals basic fallacies of the dominant economic superstition. To those who did not seek simple vindication of the government's new economic policies in the madly zooming share prices, it was apparent even before the scam came to light that there was lack of congruity between a wildly bullish share market and a largely stagnant economy. It was correctly argued that such a dichotomy was inherently unstable and that the apparent accumulation was mostly of account of unscrupulous speculation. However, instead of heeding such warnings, the overheated money market was seen as the goose that would lay golden eggs. Now the chickens of chicanery are coming home of roost.

Of course, it is a sign of the globalisation of the Indian economy that, while its liberalisation has drawn more platitudes from abroad than actual investments, the financial scam has become truly "post-national". The news of the litigation in New York between the Stanchart Bank and Citibank on the issue of inter-bank fraud has been followed quickly by the report that the Bank of England has initiated liquidation proceedings against the Mount Bank Corporation, an NRI enterprise, which is alleged to have played an important role in the scam transactions. The JPC too is believed to be investigating the trans-national flow of scam funds.

As interesting figure in this context is the estimated total of the scam: Rs 6000 crores. This is almost exactly equivalent to the two billion dollars which India has borrowed from the IMF and other foreign sources since the globalisation plan was inaugurated.

A curious aspect of the scam investigations to date is that little attention seems to be paid to recovering the looted amounts. The normal police method on receiving a report of a crime, against property is to try to recover the stolen goods even as the culprit is hunted down. In the case of this financial crime however, the country's premier criminal investigation agency, the CBI, has as yet not reported any success in locating the loot. Like the JPC, the CBI too appears to the more involved in unravelling the *dramatis personnae*

Of course, locating the loot is not as easy as it sounds. In

(Continued on page 35)

Devaluation of Foreign Policy

H.K. DUA

Does India have a place in the world commensurate with her size and potential?

Fortyfive years after independence, an answer to this question creates an uneasy feeling. Most discerning people are increasingly realising that India does not enjoy in the world the respect it should have now.

Unfortunately our leaders, whether in the government or in the Opposition, do not seem to be much bothered about the diminishing role India is playing in international affairs. This indifference to the nation's place in the world is not because of any lack of status consciousness among our political leaders but because of their narrow vision and absorption in the domestic mess which they themselves have created. They could have been forgiven for their shrinking worldview if they were really engaged in the task of nation-building. Unable to look beyond a few miles or the immediate, our political leaders have virtually stopped thinking about the massive changes that have been sweeping across the world or are likely to occur during the next few years. To expect them to think of a foreign policy to match these changes would be to expect them to do something beyond their capability.

It is not that India is suffering from a Middle Kingdom syndrome. Our political elite realises that the sun does not revolve around India, but its inertia seems to have overtaken it. What is evident is a callous unconcern for the country's dwindling prestige abroad. Maybe it is too much to expect from our leaders to have a foreign policy befitting a nation of as many as 850 million people. The reigning philosophy in New Delhi in fact questions why India should necessarily play a role in international affairs at all. This perhaps is not the deeply-held view but an attempt to rationalise the marginal role India is playing these days. It implies a sort of the recognition of the insignificant position India has been reduced to during the last two decades.

Maybe preoccupation with domestic problems has made Indians inward-looking, insular, perhaps anxious over being ignored by the rest of the world. Political instability during the last few years has taken its toll in the country's failure to evolve a coherent and dynamic foreign policy. The situation in Punjab and Kashmir, the internal strife in other parts of the country, a slow-growth economy and endless controversies over petty issues have all been diverting its attention from the essential tasks and aimed at building a nation and securing a better place in the world.

There is a link between the two. Who will, after all, take a nation seriously which willy-nilly changes its government every alternate year, where every village presents a picture of disunity, where caste and religious differences keep it bogged down in daily acrimony? The only time India makes news abroad is when it is hit by a natural calamity, widespread riots or a political upheaval or when the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund meet to throw some crumbs.

The author is the Editor of the The Hindustan Times *which carried this article as a signed commentary.*

Little do our leaders realise that a nation weakened by divisions at home and flaunting the begging bowl as a national symbol abroad cannot earn the esteem it might have been craving for. Whatever the politicians might say or the bureaucrats glibly rationalise, the nations which have got hooked to living on borrowed money simply cannot have an independent foreign policy, least of all command respect from others.

India no longer wields at the United Nations the same influence it used to a few years ago. Our Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Eduardo Faleiro, who represented India at the United Nations a few days ago asked for a permanent seat for India at the Security Council. It was an impromptu request that Faleiro made to voice a national wish. What he did not realise – perhaps innocently – is that he had neither a studied brief from the government nor the diplomatic strength of a nation to back the demand for the special status at the UN. Official claims notwithstanding, those who went to Jakarta themselves know that India was not performing a leadership role at the non-aligned summit. It was perhaps out of tune with many an event at the summit.

You can blame neither the present government nor the government that preceded it for the vacuity of our foreign policy. The failure perhaps is nation. Those whose job is to take decisions, the opinion-makers or the entire political establishment have to work out a foreign policy that is aimed at promoting the national interest. This would involve working out a foreign policy that can smoothly negotiate through the immediate difficulties India is facing vis-a-vis the rest of the world, keeping at the same time a long-term perspective. To evolve such a foreign policy would need a clear vision and considerable skill.

The challenges before Indian foreign policy are going to be fairly serious considering our shortcomings and years of neglect. It must be acknowledged that India is under pressure and this is partly an outcome of the changes the world has experienced during the last few years.

The Soviet Union has collapsed. The world is not unipolar as has been projected after the Gulf war; India nevertheless does not enjoy the bargaining power its ties with Moscow gave it for years. Even before the Soviet Union disintegrated, its attitude towards India had changed but New Delhi was slow in recognising the new realities. And now the new Russia, caught in its own problems which perhaps are more serious than those of India, cannot and should not be seen as a power to lean on. Moscow will be instead keen on accommodating the West's wishes even at the cost of causing annoyance in India.

India has to be on its own to find its way through the emerging scenario. In the long-term, India has to work out an independent foreign policy that will give it more elbow room than what it has now. It should aim at peace in the neighbourhood so that India does not have to fight another war which can inflict misery on the subcontinent and distract attention from the key talks of economic development. The new foreign policy should also take into account the strategic environment beyond the immediate neighbourhood of South Asia and China. A peaceful climate continues to be important for fighting the battle against poverty and building a strong India.

Immediately, the foreign policy-makers have to ensure that the world develops a greater understanding and perhaps a vested interest in Indian unity and territorial integrity. It is under strain in Punjab where the situation is improving, and in Kashmir, where the threat is serious. Competent diplomacy is supposed to earn security and promote national goals without fighting wars.

India is under pressure on other counts also. The United States, Japan, Germany and Russia are making demands that India should either sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty or accept some other arrangement envisaging non-proliferation in South Asia. The idea simply is to make India give up its nuclear option. The powers which want India to give up its nuclear option also want it to accept the rigours of the Missiles Technology Control Regime and cut its defence spending.

These demands are coming from the countries which wield considerable economic and political clout in the world. Although one has begun to hear different voices on foreign policy, the prodominant view in P.V. Narasimha Rao's government favours India's keeping its nuclear option open and not to submit to the pressures for accepting restrictions on the development and transfer of missiles. On defence expenditure the divergence between th Western and Indian views is also not noticeable. Th developed countries think India is spending more on ar and in the process depriving itself of funds that could used for development. New Delhi holds the opposite vie

Defence versus development is as old a debate swords and ploughshares and is unlikely to be resolv easily when the Kashmir question has again become h and Pakistan is known to be encouraging terrorism fro across the border. India is feeling that Pakistan deliberately needling it in Punjab and Kashmir and such it cannot accept the Western pleas for cuts in defen expenditure. The noises being made in Washingto Bonn, Paris and Tokyo on this account are, however, goi to create more difficulties soon for India, and New Del may not be able to brush them aside.

The Group of Seven is virtually telling India that cannot continue resisting non-proliferation proposa step up its missiles programme or retain the present lev of defence spending. And if it continues to do so, it ris cut in the flow of loans, investments and technology.

India has already accepted suggestions to liberalise i economy, throwing the doors wide open to foreign inve tors, but is finding it hard to accept these demands. Th challenge for the country is to work out a foreign policy which there is a consensus in the country and whi advances national interest. India will have to tackle th pressures with finesse. The situation need not cause Ind to curse itself for its past mistakes or the neglect of th essentials that help a nation itself decide its foreign polic

The situation, even if it is not to India's liking may, fact, be throwing up an opportunity for exploring creati possibillities in foreign policy. India can still advan national interests without going under.

India-China : Reflections on 1962

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

This week, thirty years ago, the Chinese army had mounted a full-scale military attack along the entire length of our northern border. For three years previous to that there were occasional clashes, accompanied by angry polemics and tension over border claims.

What happened on October 20 was entirely different in character. It was a massive aggression into territories beyond the lines claimed as the border by the Chinese themselves. In other words, what the Chinese achieved on the ground by the sudden military offensive was to grab fresh territories beyond what they were putting up as their claim line during the protracted negotiations.

Looking back after a lapse of thirty long years — the span of a generation — many points of reappraisal come up while the old tensions subside. It is customary in any active foreign-policy establishment, to undertake a thorough review of the past so that one could be better equipped to deal with the present and to chalk out the future. It is high time that our Foreign Office and oth specialised bodies undertook such a review. In the a sence of any comprehensive reappraisal, one has to fa back upon certain impressions and insights picked up as reporter of those troubled times.

The Chinese attack not only pushed back our line defence, but dealt a body blow on Jawaharlal Nehru authority at home and standing abroad. As one watche the mounting tension in the space between Dalai Lama arrival in India in April 1959 and the Chinese fullsca attack in October 1962, one could discern how Neh found himself unable to get a grasp over the situation. H message over the radio at that time reflected his shock the unprovoked military offensive by a neighbourin power whom he had trusted more than anybody else.

Political collapse of Nehru was evident when wrote the letters to the US President asking pathetical for arms supply (November 19, 1962). Although su sequently, he tried to rally by appealing for the five-nation non-aligned initiative, it was clear that he would be hardly able to recover, physically, mentally and politically. In a sense, the Chinese aggression came as a godsend for all those who had been denouncing the non-aligned stand of India. It was no accident that within a few weeks the Anglo-American initiative came for the virtual partitioning of Kashmir. It was Sardar Swaran Singh's tireless stonewalling that warded off the Duncan Sandys mission.

Where did we go wrong, diplomatically and militarily? For one thing, while Nehru had a remarkable vision of independence from the clutches of the big power military alliances, one could not help feeling that in the euphoria over the success of the Bandung Conference where he had actually chaperoned Zhou-en lai around, he missed assessing in time the Chinese approach to world affairs which is throughout guided by the imperatives of power politics; in other words, by the principle of balance of power.

China's concern has always been Tibet, and in the prevailing uncertainty, it wanted to show off its military prowess as a decisive element in foreign policy. That was how during the official level talks on the border claims in 1960, while the Indian side argued with legal acumen, the Chinese were working out military strategy of piercing the frontier.

Consequently, the disarray of the Indian Army in the NEFA sector was due to the fact that our troops were totally ill-clad for the high altitude operation, while there was mismanagment in the conduct of the war.

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THIS is now disclosed in great detail in Major General Palit's latest volume – a work of seminal dimension – in which one gets a glimpse of the shocking mismanagement at the top, in which the serious business of conducting a war was totally missing; instead there comes up total disregard of all norms of administrative functioning, in which personal ego played an insignificant part. The bravado of General Kaul based on the gasbag's megalomania, stands out as a fearsome reminder of unpreparedness and the absence of any well thought out strategy of dealing with a full-scale military offensive. It was a dismal picture.

While Krishna Menon's role as an outstanding diplomat will long be remembered, his stint as Defence Minister was marred by his petty subjective interference in professional military matters. It was really a tragic case, because one has to take into account his signal contribution towards the setting up of an indigenous defence system which reinforced our independence in world affairs.

An aspect of the Chinese aggression of 1962 is generally missed, and that is its linkage with the domestic politics of China at that time. The Chinese themselves have brought out the extensive damage wrought by their own aggressive sectarianism of the sixties. Obviously, such an over-heated political line at home had had its inescapable repercussions on foreign policy outlook. The Cultural Revolution had been preceded by successive waves of aggressive sectarianism, beginning with the back-to-the-village campaign, followed by the rectification campaign – all leading towards the disastrous Cultural Revolution. If one tries to integrate this domestic scene with China's angry foreign policy posture then the picture would be clearer why China took a hostile stand towards not only India but other friendly countries as well. If our understanding of the Chinese foreign policy of those years had been placed in this context of that country's domestic policy, then perhaps the damage could have been minimised and the debacle averted in 1962.

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IN the three decades since those heady days, China has chastened and Indira Gandhi's initiative in restoring ambassadorial level diplomatic relations has paid good dividends. There was a period of stalemate and the talks were reduced to rituals particularly on the thorny issue of the border dispute. There was glimmer of a breakthrough when Rajiv Gandhi visited China and Deng Xiaoping received him in 1988. While the ghastly events at Tienanmen Square put the clock back, there has been an appreciable recovery in the last two years.

In this context, it is important to note the present Chinese approach to the border dispute. At present, the entire Chinese emphasis is on confidence-building-measures (CBM) along the present line of control. Border trade is to be reopened, the intelligence network between the opposite border security establishments would be upgraded and all this may help to reduce the forces posted now on both sides of the frontier. While the Chinese have not turned down the proposal for the resumption of talks for the examination of the boundary claims, their entire emphasis is now on the confidence-building-measures along the present line of control. Obviously, the Chinese perspective is that after a few years, with the establishment of stability and tranquility along the border, the clamour for redrawing the border line as per respective claims would be fairly weakened, if not given up altogether.

On a wider scale, at the global level the Chinese maintain a caste-system approach. As a member of the club of great powers – the five permanent members of the UN Security Council – they count themselves as one of the Big Powers of today with its own nuclear arsenal. At the same time, China is serious about maintaining close and friendly relations with India on the basis of recognising India as the leading regional power in South Asia. In other words, India in the Chinese eye, does not belong to the top drawer but as the predominant regional power.

No doubt there is need for improving our relations with China. But this need can hardly be realised without taking into account the Chinese perception of themselves as being in the top category, while India will have to contend with being acknowledged as a regional power. ■

Pakistan Recasting Afghan Policy

NASIM ZEHRA

As the October 24 deadline approaches for the Afghan Interim President Burhanuddin Rabbani to vacate his seat, Afghan-related diplomatic activity in Islamabad has picked up significantly. As part of its effort to create a consensus for implementing the third phase of the May 24 Peshawar Accord, Islamabad played host to a number of key players on the Afghan scene.

During Iranian President Rafsanjani's visit in September, a major breakthrough was made on the Afghan front. They welcomed the August ceasefire which brought an end to rocket and missile attacks on innocent citizens. Islamabad and Tehran decided to coordinate their efforts and keep each other informed through diplomatic channels.

Discussions between Nawaz Sharif and Rafsanjani yielded an eight-point agreement on the objectives. These included appeal to the people of Afghanistan to avoid ethnic, linguistic, and sectarian divisions, and to seek an overall political consensus peacefully through dialogue; support to the Islamic government of Afghanistan; reaffirmed their adherence to the internationally recognised principles of non-interference in its internal affairs and called for international respect, initiation of the electoral process in Afghanistan in which all groups will participate; not to provide aid in any form to the warring Afghan factions and ensure that all aid to Afghanistan is channelled through it; create conditions in Afghanistan which would enable Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran to return to their homes in safety and with honour; provide material and moral support for rehabilitation and reconstruction of Afghanistan and its economic development ; and, welcome Afghanistan into the ECO.

During the Afghan President's three-day visit beginning on September 25, Islamabad clearly articulated the government's position on Afghanistan. In fact, President Ghulam Ishaq Khan said in his banquet address :

"I would also like to affirm we would not allow our territory to be used for undermining peace in Afghanistan or its legitimate government...there is however an imperative need to convert the Afghan ceasefire into permanent peace by taking measures to deal with factors responsible for the periodic recurrence of factional fighting in a country already ravaged by war."

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif also reiterated that, "Islamabad will make sure that our territory is not used to undermine the legitimacy of the Afghan Government. In underlining the utility of the Peshawar Accord as a basis for a peaceful political transition, the PM said: "The Peshawar Accord represents a broad consensus among the Afghan people and provides a mechanism for smooth transition, including the convening of a *shura* which will strengthen the process of conciliation and bring other political groups in the mainstream of national life."

Another key supporter of the Afghan *mujahideen*, Prince Turki al-Faisal of Saudi Arabia, head of Saudi intelligence and King Fahd's special envoy, visited Islamabad during Rabbani's visit. Trilateral talks were held between Nawaz-Rabbani and Turki. However, the primary objective of Turki's visit was to convince Hekmatyar to make peace with Kabul.

A Saudi press release in Islamabad acknowledged a joint meeting of Turki, the Saudi Ambassador in Pakistan, Lieutenant General Javed Nasir, Director-General Inter Services Intelligence and two ISI officers, with Hekmatyar in Nangarhar province on September 28. They all "called upon the leader (Hekmatyar) to abide by the August ceasefire".

These moves convey three important elements of Islamabad's current Afghan policy:

One, that Islamabad has totally delinked itself from all political elements inside Pakistan, including the Jammat-i-Islami, that call for supporting specific elements, like Hekmatyar.

Two, that it understands that Afghan reconciliation means that a 'grey' area on the Afghan political scene must be created to accommodate the *mujahideen* and non-*mujahideen* segments like Commander Dostum and many others.

Three, that without active cooperation and trust among Kabul and its bordering countries including Iran, Tajikistan and Pakistan peace will not return to Afghanistan.

These moves by Islamabad acquire special significance as differences continue among the Afghans. Especially the contentious issue of withdrawal of the Dostum militia remains unresolved. A decision was taken by the Peace Commission in late August that the Kabul Government will ensure the withdrawal of the militia.

On October 2, the Nangarhar Peace Mission that brokered ceasefire between Hekmatyar and Kabul, issued the October 4 deadline to Kabul for withdrawal of the Uzbek militia from the capital.

Underlying this commitment has been Kabul's

(Continued on page 35)

The author is a political columnist from Pakistan whose despatches appear in the The Pioneer.

Punjab : Problem or Opportunity ?

NIRMAL MUKARJI

Punjab presents a problem at once complex and simple. Complex, if one gets lost the turns and twists of its history, or if one tries to track the doings of its splintered *jathebandis*, overground and underground; relatively simple, if one stays with basics and then looks for possibilities.

First, let me quickly put down some perceptions. These were mostly gathered during my short stay in Punjab as Governor, but their roots go back to my twenty year stint there as a civil servant. Subsequent contacts, admittedly limited, have only confirmed these perceptions. And though others are bound to have different ideas, it is only by sharing each other's thoughts that a workable foundation can be established.

Punjab is basically a Sikh problem. True, others are also affected, but that does not disturb the basic proposition. The problem has persisted for so long, without any sign of abatement, that it should rank at the top of the nation's political agenda. Unfortunately it does not, despite the rhetoric poured out by every political party, in or out of power at the Centre.

The essence of the problem today is that virtually all Sikhs feel alienated. Those in Punjab feel so most of all, but so do those in other parts of the country and, indeed, all over the world. The Indian mainstream would like to believe that alienation is confined to a limited number of misguided youths, some of whom have taken to militancy. This is not true. Alienation is near-universal among Sikhs.

Most Sikhs have learnt to keep their feelings bottled up in the presence of 'mainstream' elements. In the spectrum of Sikh alienation, one end is heavily occupied by those who sublimate their feelings in a life of prayer. The Sikhs are an extremely devout people, contrary to a 'mainstream' view that they are wild creatures. At the other end of the spectrum, many have taken to violence. Thus alienation is expressed in a variety of ways ranging from silent prayer to booming guns.

Sikh history has its own place, but it is the events of recent years that are more relevant for understanding the present level alienation. The turning point was 1984, when the Sikhs went through three traumatic experiences in quick succession. The first was the Operation Bluestar, which desecrated the Golden Temple and completely destroyed the Akal Takht. The twin shrines mean at least as much to the Sikhs as the Vatican does to Catholics. Bluestar was, therefore, an emotionally shattering experience for them.

The second was the Operation Woodrose, which immediately followed Bluestar. This made the Sikhs in the countryside, especially in the Majha belt, feel like hunted animals. Countless young men preferred to flee rather than face capture and worse. Those left behind—women, children and the aged—suffered indignities, often imprisonment, for refusing to disclose the whereabouts of the young men. The third was the massacre of innocents in Delhi and elsewhere following Indira Gandhi's assassination. This was seen as vengefully organised by those in power. Almost overnight, Sikhs felt that they had become second class citizens.

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ALIENATION has steadily deepened since then. For one thing, nothing has been done by those responsible for Bluestar, Woodrose and the November 1984 killings to atone for the suffering inflicted on the Sikh community as a whole for the wrong-doings of a few. Politically, the Rajiv-Longowal accord which was projected as a brave measure for forging peace has, in fact, remained unimplemented to this day. That, and the subsequent dismissal of the Barnala Government without valid justification, has generated much mistrust of Delhi in the Sikh mind.

A largely 'law and order' approach may curb militancy, but it is hardly the answer for mass alienation. Especially as 'law and order' has come to mean 'order at any cost', never mind law, certainly never mind human rights. Finding even draconian laws inadequate, the security forces have joined the battle in the extra-constitutional arena. As a result, there are innumerable allegations of harassment, illegal detention, torture and false encounters. Unlimited powers, especially extra-constitutional, have led to correspondingly high levels of brutality and corruption. Innocents have suffered, and continue to suffer, far more than the militants.

In Punjab, the maxim that eventually individuals and groups tend to acquire the attributes of their adversaries has proved to be cruelly true. If Sikh extremists have become terrorists, the state has become counter-terrorist. If the extremists commit brutalities and trample upon human rights, the state feels justified to

The author is a former Governor of Punjab and a former Cabinet Secretary, Government of India.

do exactly the same. The Sikh peasant is caught between the two, with the militants knocking at his door at night and the police during the day. The security forces have thus added to his insecurity.

The 'order at any cost' policy requires the security forces to commit what would otherwise be regarded as crimes under a straight-forward 'law and order' regime. This is bad enough. But far too often security personnel go beyond even this framework. For instance, innocent persons are illegally detained as suspects and then let off on payment of large sums of money. The two strands of an 'order at any cost' policy and operations beyond that, account almost entirely for the deepening of alienation since the turning-point year of 1984.

There is no justification whatsoever for those who operate beyond the framework of given policy. There is some extenuation for those who are required to implement an 'order at any cost' policy handed down by political masters drained of political ideas. The security forces work in extremely difficult conditions. They and their families are in constant danger of their lives. It is as idle to blame them as a group as it is to condemn the Sikh community as a whole. Terrible things have been done by wrong-headed individuals on both sides. If and when the happy day dawns when there is peace, there will have to be a large-hearted burying of hatchets on both sides.

In effect, we are operating a breeder reactor system in Punjab. A breeder atomic reactor produces more fuel than it consumes. The two-strand 'order at any cost' and 'beyond the framework' operations, ostensibly to curb Sikh militancy, are pushing more and more young men into the ranks of the militants. The more we persist with such operations, incorrectly referred to as 'law and order' enforcement, the stronger militancy becomes. Body counts of the last several years tragically bear this out. Concomitantly, alienation and mistrust grow.

Peace will not come so long as there is mass alienation. The Sikhs, particularly of Punjab, profoundly mistrust the 'Delhi durbar'. That expression to them means the totality of the so-called 'mainstream' ruling class at the Centre. It does not matter which political party is in power, for on an issue like Punjab all components of this class think alike. Of all parties, the Congress is mistrusted the most, even hated. For it is seen as being responsible not only for the injuries of the watershed year, 1984, but also for the brutally corrupt regime imposed since then.

In the face of such deep-seated alienation and mistrust, any political initiative by the Centre is unfortunately doomed to be regarded as yet another piece of deception. After all, the much trumpeted Rajiv-Longowal accord proved to be one. So did V.P. Singh's much publicised visit to Amritsar soon after taking office. Any package unilaterally granted to Punjab may prove to be equally doomed. For what is involved is the self-respect of a bruised people who perceive their case in terms of rights to be recognised, not as a beggar's bowl into which crumbs of questionable generosity are to be dropped.

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IF Punjab is essentially a Sikh problem, do the non-Sikhs (mainly Hindus) not matter? Of course, they do. But they cannot survive, much less prosper, if the Sikhs remain disaffected. The future of the minorities in Punjab depends on the Sikh problem being solved. The Hindus of Punjab have to learn to live with the Sikhs (and vice versa) and with the Punjabi language. Regrettably, so far they have thought of themselves more as part of the so-called 'mainstream' ruling class at the Centre, mistaking this for nationalism, than as Punjabis.

There is no doubt that Pakistan has been infiltrating arms and trained personnel into Punjab. This has made Sikh militancy increasingly potent and the task of containing it correspondingly more difficult. Effective measures, both diplomatic and on the ground, to counter infiltration are necessary. But it is simply not true that Pakistani interference is the real problem in Punjab. If we in India could find an answer to the disaffection of the Sikhs, Pakistan would eventually be squeezed out of the Punjab situation.

Sandwiched between Islamic fundamentalism on one side and its Hindutva counterpart on the other, sections of the Sikhs too have become fundamentalist. This is one mode through which alienation is expressed. It is, in other words, an effect and not the cause. 'Mainstream' critics who pick on Sikh fundamentalism as the real villain are thus mistaken. They need to get past this surface phenomenon and discover the underlying reality.

Punjab has its economic problems. Its agriculture has plateaued. Its industry and trade are declining. It has a growing army of unemployed youth, many of whom take to militancy. But its per capita income is still among the highest in the country. Other less prosperous states are in greater economic distress. Therefore, while Punjab's economic issues do require attention, especially its unemployment, it would be wrong to view the Punjab problem primarily in terms of economics.

Calls for Khalistan or its latest variant, a sovereign Sikh state, do disturb the nationalist mind. But two sobering thoughts might help to put these in perspective. First, the unity and integrity of the nation is undoubtedly important, but the idea has acquired inviolability only since independence. Prior to that, it was breached with impunity when the 'mainstream' ruling class acquiesced in the partition of the country. Second, ethnic groups the world over are busy declaring sovereignty for their homelands. This has not necessarily made them independent, because pre-sovereignty interdependency on neighbours in matters like trade, communications and defence remains intact.

Finally, we return to the basic theme. The demand for sovereignty made by Sikh *jathebandis* is a reflection of a deep sense of alienation amongst the Sikhs. The mass alienation of any group results in the assertion of its identity, often in an aggressive manner. When the group has a territorial base, as is the case with Punjab's Sikhs, the assertion of identity gets linked to the concept of a homeland. It is only a short step from there to a cry of 'autonomy for the homeland'. Thus it is that the operative word in Punjab today is *khud-mukhtari*.

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FROM these basics of the Punjab situation, two major issues emerge. First, something simply has to be done to ameliorate, if not entirely eliminate, the alienation of the Sikhs. And, second, an acceptable answer has to be found to the demand for autonomy. All other issues are secondary in importance. For instance, if alienation goes can militancy or the Pakistan factor survive for long? Again, if there is the fullest possible autonomy, can Punjabis not be trusted to look after their economic well-being? Also, since autonomy implies a corresponding degree of responsibility, do the minorities really have any cause for fear?

If *khud-mukhtari* in whatever form can be viewed as the ultimate goal, getting rid of alienation is the immediate agenda. The two are interlinked. It is only by clearing the undergrowth of alienation that possibilities about the more distant goal of autonomy can open up and be discussed. Conversely, a degree of clarity now about the range within which alternative forms of autonomy can be thought of could itself help in reducing the level of alienation. Consequently both items require simultaneous thought and debate.

But first a dilemma has to be overcome. On the one hand, as stated earlier, the Sikhs in Punjab mistrust the Congress. On the other, the Congress does happen to be the party ruling at the Centre, and is likely to be so for some time. Possible alternatives to it, such as the BJP, are neither in real contention nor, from Punjab's point of view, better. Therefore, the Sikhs of Punjab and the Congress at the Centre will perforce have to do business with each other.

It is not going to be easy for either side. A large and flabby organisation like the Congress cannot change easily. On their part, the Sikhs may find it difficult to forgive and talk. Especially as the person heading the Congress now was the Union Home Minister during the *Katl-i-am* of November 1984 and did nothing to help the Sikhs then. He was leading the Congress when, in June 1991, the Punjab elections were unjustifiably called off at the last minute, simply because non-Congress victory was otherwise certain. How, the Sikhs may argue, can such a party with such a leader be trusted?

However, there are mitigating factors. The focus of the Sikhs' ire against the Congress was, after all, the dynasty. That is no longer there. It would be self-defeating to hold the sins of the dynastic rulers against the successor Congress leadership. Certainly the Congress has still to rid itself of much that is undesirable in its inherited baggage. Also, the departure of the dynasty has made little difference to the travails of the people of Punjab. Nevertheless, the plain fact is that the Congress at the Centre has begun to change for the better so far as the Sikhs are concerned.

As to Narasimha Rao's past record, there is a case for not judging him too harshly. He was hardly in real command in November 1984. The cancellation of elections in June 1991 was without doubt inexcusable, but a charitable view could be that possibly Rao was not properly briefed about the consequences of such a step. All in all, giving the Congress under Rao a chance to redeem itself vis-a-vis Punjab, and more especially the Sikhs, has much to commend itself. The alternative of not doing so would only prolong Punjab's agony. Without any visible sign of a more favourable opportunity opening up in the future.

As Prime Minister, Rao has shown a new understanding of the problems of States like Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir. On Kashmir, he has not only rejected the BJP's call for abrogating Article 370 but has expressed his willingness to consider 'what else they would like within the Indian Constitution'. He has elucidated that 'if some people think that within the Indian Constitution an amount of autonomy which meets with their aspirations is possible, then that is what we have to explore'. Earlier, while speaking of greater autonomy for the States generally, he had not ruled out special status for problem States like Punjab within the framework of the Constitution.

In effect, the Prime Minister seems willing to consider 370-plus for Kashmir and perhaps much the same for Punjab, though within the framework of the Constitution. The expression 'framework' obviously allows room for Constitutional Amendments that would incorporate such special status as may be worked out for these States. At the same time, it captures in a single word the doctrine of the basic features of the Constitution, in respect of which the Supreme Court is clear that such features cannot be amended. It appears that the Prime Minister has set the range within which levels of autonomy which meet the aspirations of the people can be looked at.

But how is one to discover such levels of autonomy? The traditional way has been incremental, taking the existing federal dispensation as the starting point and advancing here or there beyond that. The Sarkaria Commission did just this and ended up making recommendations which, for a State like Punjab, turned out to be far short of the aspirations of the alienated group. The other route, untrodden so far, would be leave it to the people's elected representatives to propose the extent of autonomy and the form of governance that would meet their aspirations. If their proposals do not offend any basic feature, they could without further ado be incorporated in the Constitution as special provisions.

Applied to Punjab, this modality would require the existence of a truly representative legislative assembly. The present legislature does not qualify, because the Sikh peasantry largely did not vote in the last election. If all concerned were to participate in the next election, the legislative body they elect could be treated as a sub-constituent assembly as well. In this capacity it could propose the system of governance and the degree of autonomy that Punjab wants. The sub-Constitution that emerges would need to be endorsed by a two-thirds majority, in line with the practice at the Centre. If it does not breach any basic feature, parliament in its constituent mode should have no serious difficulty in adopting it.

The sole agenda before the sub-constituent assembly would have to be to give concrete shape to Sikh aspirations. A useful beginning could be the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, the essence of which is that the Centre should look after only four subjects: defence, foreign affairs, currency and communications. The Sarkaria Commission rejected the resolution, more or less ex-parte, mainly because the Centre would be left with no 'fiscal resources of its own, independent of the constituent units'. So far the resolution has been discussed in purely Sikh gatherings. When a secular forum like the assembly takes it up, Sikhs and non-Sikhs would have a chance to appreciate the anguish and the aspirations of the one and the fears and anxieties of the other. There would have to be a process of give and take. If this is done with determination, a formulation enjoying the support of two-thirds of the assembly should not be impossible to hammer out.

An election in which all concerned take part is not unthinkable. All those concerned did contest in the parliamentary election of November 1989. They would have done so if Punjab had had elections in February, 1990 when several other states went to the polls, but the National Front government missed the opportunity. They were ready to do so in June 1991, but the Congress played foul. The boycott of the last elections by Sikh elements was unfortunate. Whenever elections are next held—and this must be soon because the present government lacks legitimacy—those who abstained last time would have to be persuaded to return to the hustings. If they are sure that the next legislature will also be a sub-constituent assembly, they might be so persuaded.

If the suggested route has takers, at the Centre and in Punjab, there may be new hope where there is despair. But while such a 'light at the end of the tunnel' expectation may bring some cheer, it would be no substitute for an agenda to neutralise Sikh alienation.

That subject really requires a separate article. For now it is sufficient to mention three sub-agendas which demand synchronised attention. One is the need for those who perpetrated Bluestar, Woodrose and the November 1984 pogrom to make amends seen as satisfactory by the affected group. The second is to right the wrong done to Punjab by not implementing the three main elements of the Rajiv-Longowal accord: Chandigarh, river waters and territories. The third is to provide humane administration to Punjab so that alienation can come down rather than keep getting aggravated every day. All three sub-agendas are important, but the third is pressingly urgent. Putting it through is not going to be easy, for those running the present system will be stout opponents. A changeover to humane governance is possible only if those in political control develop the right perceptions.

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ONE final thought. Alienation is generated when relations get soured between an 'out' group, like the Sikhs in the present instance, and the dominant group, earlier referred to as the 'mainstream' ruling class. Essentially, therefore, alienation is a problem of relationship. Seen in this way the responsibility for restoring harmony rests on both sides. Indeed, the greater part of the responsibility lies with the dominant group, for its very dominance can influence the situation more than anything the 'out' group can possibly contribute. It is also in the enlightened self-interest of the dominant group to heal festering sores like Punjab and J & K rather than worsen them by persisting with repressive policies.

In sum, possibilities may open up in Punjab if two variables move in a positive direction: the state of mind of the 'mainstream' ruling class; and Punjab's position in the Prime Minister's priorities. (Courtesy: *Seminar*) ■

Now a G-1 ?

In the interests of economy, Bush has privately suggested that Western leaders change the format of the G7 meetings, even holding them alternate years. This prompted Prime Minister Brian Mulroney of Canada into creative if not lateral thinking. His proposal for effecting econmies: Why not just put George Bush in a room by himself for three days?

At the concluding news conference of the eighteenth Annual G7 summit meeting Mulroney said "We could move Bush around from year to year, put him in a room so he could cogitate for three days and then come out and tell you what he thinks."

Source: Associated Press in the *International Herald Tribune*, (July 9 1992)

Seven Commandments for South

JOHN KENNETH GALBRAITH

As a follow-up of the South Commission, the South Centre has been set up under the leadership of Julius Nyerere. The South Centre publishes South Letter. *This article by Prof Galbraith is in the form of a brief review of the Report of the South Commission, entitled* The Challenge of the South. *It appeared in the* South Letter *(No 14, Summer 1992).*

It is some 40 years since I first interested myself in the economic problems of the poor lands of the planet, called in more neutral fashion the South. There was then almost no literature on the subject. The erstwhile colonial powers accepted the poverty of their subject people as normal. A concern for the problems of the developing lands came with the end of the colonial era.

Teaching those early courses in economic development, I would have greatly welcomed *The Challenge to the South*. This splendid piece of work, the product of informed study and discussion and a remarkable will to find agreement, would have been a basic and nearly unique text. It would also have saved both my students and myself from a number of positions since shown by experience to be in error.

There is, perhaps, one flaw in this document. Although it covers much ground, there is some tendency, I believe, for the essentails to be lost in the merely good. And, on occasion, on particular difficult matters, the role of the state in development being one, there is a slight sacrifice of emphasis to tact. Accordingly, I have thought in this comment to isolate in the shortest form what I believe to be the basic principles governing the economics and politics of development. There are times, I venture to think, when the errors of hard, short statement are less than what is lost in longer, more cautious prose.

The first need is to recognise the primary role in early economic life of agriculture – the peasant. Without food there is nothing, not life itself. One of the gravest if past errors has been in associating development with industry, notably primary industry. And farm prices, in frequent cases, have been deliberately kept low as a favour to the urban population. This has been a disastrous error, redeemed too often only in later hunger. It is noteworthy that the developed states, all of them in the past, strongly favoured their farmers and still do.

Second, and closely associated with agricultural development, is land reform. No country in recent times has flourished under an economic and political regime of great landlords or even small ones. Both the economic progress and political democracy require that economic independence be accorded to the men and women who till the land.

Next, and third, is the central role of universal education. This the developed lands strogny emphasised in their emergent years – nothing was deemed so important as compulsory schooling for all. Progress has been made on this in the Third World, but there is far yet to go. Let it be remembered that there is no literate population on this planet that is poor, no illiterate population that is otherwise than poor. In the decades past too many physically impressive industrial plants have been located amidst ignorant people.

Next is the role of the state. This role is important, but it must be kept within the limits of the scarcest resource in the poor lands – that is the supply of honest and effective administrative talent. It is in the nature of planning,regulation and public developmental action that they early exhaust this scarce administrative resource. Socialism – the extensive public ownership of enterprise – especially exhausts this scarce resource and with strongly adverse consequences.

Next, and also central to the role of the state, is a firm fiscal context. There must be effective tax collection which bears firmly on ability to pay. No escape may be allowed through favouritism,corruption or incompetent administration. Expenditure must then be within the available revenues, well-considered longer-range investment apart. There must be no drainage of resources because of badly managed enterprise.

Next is the role of the military. This must be minimal and under strict civilian control. Military expenditure and the consequent claim on scarce resources in the poor countries is the greatest and cruellest scandal of our time. It is also one in which the developed countries,including notably the United States, happily participate. The military power is the major modern threat, directly or indirectly, to democratic process.

Next, a closely related matter, is the devastating effect of international or internal conflict between or within the countries of the South. Nothing so ensures poverty leading on to starvation and death. In the direct Cold War confrontation between the Soviet union and the united States extending over nearly half a century, no one got killed, a few espionage agents and escaping refugees excepted. Under American and Soviet auspices hundres of thousands were killed and many more further impoverished in Indo-china and Afghanistan. (The issue was whether these lands should be capitilist or communist, both systems being irrelevant.) And elsewhere in the Third World millions were destroyed in national, ethnic or religious conflict and many, many more reduced to impoverishment and starvation. Tolerance and peace must be a prime goal in all of the South. Nothing else should be so emphasised.

Finally, there is the role of othe rich countries – the North. Here I strongly emphasise the writing down and writing off of debt unwisely incurred in the past. In earlier times the United States, Canada, Britain and France resorted to abrupt default when they could not pay. Now when foolish banks have made foolish loans to then-foolish governments, repayment should not be expected. An economically depressing share of the external earnings of Latin America and some other countries now go for service of dedundant debt. Beyond this, I would like to see a continuing flow of help from the internatinal agencies and direcly from the rich countries. This is an elementary manifestation of civilised values.

There is much more in this admirable treatise. Here, I would argue, are the seven absolute essentials- the seven commandments. There is also merit, I would urge, in identifying what cannot and must not be escaped. ■

A Brief Biography of Samir Amin

by

SAMIR AMIN

This article first appeared in A Bibliographical Dictionary of Dissenting Economists *(England: Edward Elgar, 1992), edited by Philip Avestis and Malcolm Sawyer.It was written by the distinguished radical economic thinker, Samir Amin himself, in the third person. It is reproduced here from the well-known journal,* Monthly Review *(September 1992).*

Samir Amin was born in Cairo in 1931 and was educated at the Lycee Francis there. He gained a Ph.D in Political Economy in Paris (1957), as well as degrees from the Institut de Statistiques and from the Institut d'Etudes Politiques. He then returned home where he was attached to the planning bodies of Nasser's regime. He left Egypt in 1960 to work with the Ministry of Planning of the newly independent Mali (1960-1963), and following this, he commenced an academic career. He has held the position of full professor in France since 1966 and was for ten years (1970-1980) the director of the UN African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (in Dakar). Since 1980 he has been directing the African Office of the Third World Forum, an international non-governmental association for research and debate.

The main contributions of Samir Amin can be classified under four headings: (i) a critique of the theory and experiences of development; (ii) an alternative proposal for the analysis of the global system which he calls "really existing capitalism"; (iii) a re-reading of the history of social formations, and; (iv) a reinterpretation of what he describes as "post-capitalist" societies.

Amin's critique of the theory of development goes back to his Ph.D dissertation (1957) published later under the title *Accumulation on a World Scale*. Conventional theory presents a general view of the problem that might be summed up in the simple proposition that "underdevelopment" is nothing more than delayed development. The emerging conclusions advocate "development policies" focused on more thorough participation in the international division of labour. *Accumulation* was among the first texts to challenge this conventional wisdom. Bourgeois economics finds attractive only the study of contingent interconnections resulting from the play of such strictly economic phenomena as prices and incomes. Moreover, in this exercise it invariably posits a hypothetical system close to the "ideal type" of capitalism. For that reason, an examination of bourgeois economic statements on "underdevelopment" throws into exceedingly sharp relief the inadequacies and the narrow range of the conventional "science" of economics.

The limitations are most clearly visible in three areas of economic analysis: monetary problems, the conjunctural state of the economy, and international relations. That is hardly an accident. The ebb and flow of economic tides indicate that in proffering its hypothesis of spontaneous, ineluctable balance, bourgeois economics turns a blind eye to the contradictory dynamics inherent in capitalist accumulation. As for the theories it propounds on international exchanges, notably those f comparative advantage and the self-equilibrating alance of external payments, they rise no higher than vapid ideology of universal harmony between nations perating as partners in the world capitalist system.

Such was the critical thrust developed in *Accumula-* *on*. However, bourgeois economics aspires to the for- ulation of a social philosophy asserting a broader idea: iat in its spread, the market of commodities and roduction factors" creates maximal conditions for the tisfaction of all, thus constituting a rational process anscending history. This claim stands on shaky ound. For the discipline of "economics" itself is noth- g more than a pseudo-science, a consequence of the onomic alienation peculiar to capitalism. "Economics" the result of that peculiarly capitalist trait whereby ienomena generated by society seem to confront that me society as if they were natural laws external to it. hus linked to the illusion of a rationality beyond his- ry, bourgeois socio-economic philosophy is unable to al with the real history of societies.

Beyond this critique Amin offers an alternative ethodology to deal with the analysis of global pitalism in two books, *Imperialism and Unequal* *velopment* and *The Law of Value and Historical* *aterialism*. According to him, there are two ways of oking at the social reality of our modern world. The st stresses the fundamental relationship which fines the capitalist mode of production at its most stract level and, from there, focuses on the allegedly ndamental class struggle between the proletariat and bourgeoisie. The second stresses the other dimen- n of capitalist reality, its unequal development rldwide, and hence focuses its analysis on the conse- ences that polarisation involves at every level, thus fining other issues in the political and social struggles it occupy the forefront of the historical stage. In this alytical framework, the development of the periphery s always been the history of a never-ending "adjust- nt" to the demands and constraints of dominant pital. The centres "restructure" themselves and the ripheries are "adjusted" to these restructurings. linking is precisely reversing this relation; that is, ordinating external relations to the logic of internal velopment.

Polarisation on a global level is thus the immanent oduct of the expansion of really existing capitalism. the scale of the world capitalist system, the law of ue operates on the basis of a truncated market which egrates the commerce of products and the move- nts of capital but excludes labour power from it. The rldwide law of value then tends of standardise the ces of merchandise but not the remunerations of our since its range of world distribution of produc- ty. Even beyond the law of worldwide value, unequal ess to natural resources, technological monopolies, ra-economic mechanisms of political and military mination – as well as the effects of the domination of life-styles, organisation, and consumption – have vastly increased this polarisation in every dimension.

In fact, the polarisation of wealth and power within the world capitalist system has passed through three stages. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, thanks to the colonisation of Americas and its effects on the acceleration of the mercantilist proto-capitalism of Atlantic Europe, that part of the world acquired for the first time a decisive superiority over the old civilisations of the Orient which it prepared to attack, thus bringing a halt to their own proto-capitalist evolution (and sometimes even precipitating regressive involution). In the nineteenth century the industrial revolution and then imperialism (in the classical Leninist sense of the term), accentuated this polarisation of wealth and power which became expressed in the contrast between industrialised and non-industrialised countries. Amin proposes the thesis that the structural crisis of our own epoch, starting in 1970, begins a new stage in world domination (marked by new technologies, new forms of worldwide finance capital, etc.), which results not in a reduction but an aggravation of polarisation. The peripheral industrialisation of one part and the "fourth-worldisation" of another part constitute the new forms corresponding to this last stage of polarisation.

This polarisation has postponed the question of the eventual socialist transformation in the developed capitalist societies, while in the periphery it has required objectively envisaging a "different development" from the one that would result – in these conditions – from its integration into the world capitalist system.

In this conceptual frame, Amin has re-evaluated the various radical attempts at development which occurred throughout the 1960s and 1970s in the Third World (what he calls the "Bandung Era 1955-1975"). The Bandung project was defined by the following features: (i) a determination to develop productive forces and diversify production (notably to industrialise); (ii) a determination to ensure that the national state should lead and control the process; (iii) the belief that "technical" models are "neutral" and can simply be reproduced; (iv) the belief that his process does not involve a popular initiative as a starting point but simply popular support for state actions; (v) the belief that this process is not fundamentally in contradiction with participation in the international division of labour even if it involves temporary conflicts with the developed capitalist countries. Realisation of this national bourgeois project involved the hegemonic national bourgeois class, through its state, acquiring control in a number of areas, at least of the following processes: (i) control of the reproduction of the labour force, which implies a relatively complete and balanced development so that local agriculture can be, *inter alia*, in a position to provide the basic ingredients of that reproduction of capital, (ii) control of national resources; (iii) control of local markets and the capacity to break through into the world market in competitive conditions; (iv) control of the financial circuits making it possible to centralise the surplus and direct it to productive uses; and (v) control of the technologies in use at the level of development of productive forces reached.

History has exposed the inadequacies and the fragility of the dream of the bourgeois nation-state in today's Third World. For after the initial period of post-War prosperity, the world economy slid into crisis in the early 1970s. Immediately the capitalist camp went on the offensive again and imposed the hard-nosed demands of the transnationalisation process on Third World Societies. It turned their shattered state machinery into simple transmission belts, and over the grave of the aborted bourgeois national-state, it erected the object of its own desire: the comprador state (*Maldevelopment*).

Amin also developed a reading of history consistent with his concept of unequal development (*Class and Nation*). In his opinion what separates capitalism from all the advanced societies preceding it is not only a quantitative difference of the degree of development of productive forces. The difference is also qualitative. In capitalism, surplus value is obtained through the economic mechanism of the law of value whereas in all earlier societies the extraction of the surplus took the form of a tribute imposed by non-economic means. The contrast between, on the one hand, the transparency of economic phenomena in pre-capitalist societies and, on the other, its opaqueness through the law of value in capitalism, leads to a reversal of the hierarchy of authority. Whereas the economy directly commands the capitalist dynamic (which is then expressed through the play of economic laws which seem to impose themselves on society as laws of nature), a politico-ideological authority was dominant in earlier societies. Amin believes that Marx emphasised precisely this reversal of relations between structure and superstructure and therefore emphasised the essential character common to all advanced pre-capitalist forms (which Amin calls, for that reason, the "tributary mode of production"), in contrast to capitalism.

Unfortunately, the dominant currents of Marxism refused to consider the superstructural dynamics (contenting themselves with a vague theory of the superstructure as a "reflection" of the exigencies of the economic base), just as they refused to analyse the systems of pre-capitalist societies closely bound by multiple relations—political, cultural (religious among others), and economic. This reduction of Marxism did not predispose it to understand the transition to capitalism, while it inspired research in a false direction, namely that of the possible "succession" of modes of production such as that of slavery-feudalism or by default, Marxism became trapped in the mythological contrast of the "two-roads": the open Occidental way (slavery—feudalism—capitalism), and the *cul-de-sac* of the "Asiatic mode of production." Amin has rejected these theses and has tried to demonstrate their Eurocentric character.

According to Amin, pre-capitalist societies are characterised by differentiation of the principal source or authority because of what he has called the "central" or "peripheral" nature of the tributary society under consideration. The "central" or "peripheral" character in pre-capitalism can be found in the area of the dominant authority, that is to say, in the state (power) and in ideology (cultures, religions), whereas the "central" or "peripheral" character of a capitalist formation is located in the area of the economy. In this sense, Amin has defined feudalism not as a specific mode of production but as a specific—peripheral—form of tributary society. It was peripheral simply because the centralisation of state power which defines central tributary society was embryonic: the absolute monarchies (close to the advanced tributary model), appeared relatively late in Europe, precisely in the proto-capitalist phase of the mercantilist transition. Amin has explained this peripheral character of feudalism by the proximity of the communal phase among the barbarians from which medieval Europe developed. But this lag in Europe—less advanced than the Oriental tributaries—did not seem to have been a handicap in the acceleration of later development, but on the contrary was an advantage because of the greater flexibility of the society which it encompassed.

Amin later developed his reflections on culture through a critique of Eurocentrism which he qualified as "culturalism," meaning that it is based on the hypothesis that the different "cultures" (European, Oriental) are characterised by trans historical invariants which determine developments; these are not subject to the laws of general evolution. There he tried to show the mythological character of these invariants, artificially constructed both to legitimise the specific dynamic opened by European history (by the myths of Greek ancestry, by "Christianophilia," by racism), and to legitimise by contrast the supposed impasse of other societies.

It is also in this overall framework that Amin discusses the issues of socialism (*The Future of Maoism, After Capitalism, Delinking*). In his opinion, Marx underestimated the center-periphery polarisation in the worldwide process of capitalist expansion. Marx thought that following the industrial revolution, the capitalist system would take very little time to accomplish its universalising mission. Reality worked out differently.

According to Amin, the challenging of the capitalist order from revolts in its periphery compels a rethinking of the whole question of "socialist transition" towards the abolition of classes. The Marxist tradition remains handicapped by its initial theoretical vision of "workers' revolutions" opening up (on the basis of advanced productive forces) a rapid transition marked by popular democratic rule which should be considerably more democratic than the most democratic of bourgeois states. Nevertheless, all the revolutions of our time (Russia, China, Vietnam, Cuba, Yugoslavia, etc.) that were unmistakably socialist in intent have been the result of the unequal development in capitalist expansion. Global polarisation has thus been the historical force behind these types of revolutions by the *peoples* of the periphery. They have been anti-capitalist in the sense of opposing the existing capitalist development which has proved intolerable for the people.

But that does not mean that these anti-capitalist revolutions are purely socialist. By the force of circumstance, they have a complex nature. The expression of their specific and new contradictions, which had not been imagined in the classical perspective of the socialist transition as conceived by Marx, gives post-capitalist regimes their real content, which is that of a *popular national construction* in which the socialist and capitalist forces and projects combine and conflict. This objective contradiction should be managed through political democracy and a mixed economy. Instead it has been managed through statism which negated its very existence, thus reflecting the reconstruction of privileged class interests.

Will the ongoing crisis of alleged socialist societies ead to the restoration of capitalism? Amin has stressed hree main challenges that these societies face. First, the democratic issue: will they accept a pure and simple estoration of bourgeois political democracy or will they ucceed in giving it a progressive content and thus move oward the social management of the economy? Second, the market issue: will these countries simply ccept the law of the market, which is bound to be operating savagely against them, or will they succeed in mastering the market through non-bureaucratic social planning? Third, the external issue: will these countries eintegrate into the world economy and so inevitably be eripheralised or will they succeed in mastering the pening of their economies? Amin argues that the nswers to these questions will depend on the outcome f the ongoing social struggles. Will class interests override the popular dimension of the systems and opt penly for capitalism or, by contrast, will this dimension e reinforced through democracy?

For Amin the unilateral market solution can never ut right unbearable social, political, internal, and international contrasts. Critical thought is concerned recisely with identifying alternative social alliances which can provide escape routes from the vicious circles f the market. Different routes are required by the arious regions of the world; specific individual policies annot be derived from the unilateral rationality of the market. The imperatives of our time therefore imply he rebuilding of the world system on the basis of olycentrism. The various regions and countries hould coordinate their visions and subordinate their xternal relations to the contraints of their internal

internal development to the global expansion of capitalism.

The social alliances which define the content of the strategies for the various regions are necessarily different. In the West they will certainly keep a "bourgeois" dimension, produced by a long history of advanced development. This reality does not preclude an evolution towards socialisation. In the East the alliances will call for a liberation of society from the exclusive rule of the state and will encourage a social dialectic which recognises the conflict between capitalism and socialism. But in the Third World they will more often call for revolutionary change since here the bourgeois subalternisation is unbearable. In all cases one can acknowledge a popular, national, and regional content rather than a unilateral bourgeois vision of the market. This dramatic challenge is felt in the South stronger than in the West or in the East, but *perestroika* is needed everywhere.

Amin suffers no illusions as to whether Marxism is going through a crisis. For him whoever approaches historical materialism as a method (not as a definitive theory forever sealed and delivered at the death of Marx, Lenin, or Mao), knows that the changing realities of life present a dynamic Marxism with a continuing series of challenges to creative innovation. To renew its vitality, Marxism has to meet those challenges. The penalty for failure is atrophy. Only religious dogmatism, which is impervious to reality, is capable of seeing in an intellectual crisis nothing but threats to its own certainties. ■

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Rural Family Welfare Strategies

FROM GOVERNMENT TO PEOPLE

J.P. GUPTA

India, demographically speaking, is the world's most critical country and is projected to overtake China to become the world's most populous country early in the next century. Its population, estimated at about 844.3 million (Census 1991), continues to grow at the rate of 2.11 per cent (1991) per year. With more than 16 million being added each year, India contributes about 16 per cent (1990) to the world's population.

India's population doubling time is around 32 years. The decade of the nineties is, therefore, a critical decade and represents India's last opportunity to take the actions needed to prevent yet another doubling of its population, before it stabilises at about 1.5 billion, around the first quarter of the next century.

India was the first country to launch a purely voluntary national Family Planning Programme (FPP). Though there was a compelling demographic justification for such a programme, its over-arching objective has been, and rightly so, to help assist couples achieve their reproductive goals; to enable them to determine in a free, informed and responsible manner, the number and spacing of their children. The Indian Family Planning Programme clearly sub-serves a demographic goal, but, to solely place on the national programme the burden of societal fertility decline may not be appropriate.

Reproductive freedom, in its truest sense, implies the right to ready access to family planning information and services. This right must, necessarily, be accompanied by the right to make voluntary and informed choices on the methods of contraception, be they traditional or modern, reversible or irreversible. These decisions of the millions of couples would have to be supported by the full knowledge of the personal, familial and societal consequences of their reproductive behaviours. Rather than reinforce the bias towards a single permanent method—70 per cent of the couple protection to-date is through sterilisation—the programme should now facilitate informed voluntary choice by:

- widely disseminating comprehensive reproductive health information; and
- providing universal access to a broad range of quality reproductive health care services.

Dr Gupta is the Director, National Institute of Health and Family Welfare. He has emphasised that the views expressed in the article are based on his personal experience and do not necessarily represent those of the organisation he is heading, which is an autonomous body under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

The national programme has not been coercive, (except for a brief spell, which boomeranged and literally derailed the programme for a long while) though scattered incidents of sterilisation abuses occasionally continue to be reported. There is an absence of real reproductive freedom for a vast majority of the 142 million (1990) eligible couples in the country, particularly those tucked away in the remote desert, hilly or tribal hamlets.

The constraints to the reproductive freedom arise not merely from poor physical access to family welfare service delivery points. In rural areas where the population is highly dispersed, there is a constraint on outreach by family planning staff and frequency of client-provider contacts.

Social barriers to the demand for contraception arise due to a number of factors including a strong pronatalistic culture, that puts pressure on proving fecundity as early after marriage as possible; the strong gender bias including son preference for the purpose of old-age security and death and other rituals. Under the pressure to limit family size and the not-so freely available legalised abortion services, there is evidence to the large-scale use of pre-natal sex determination and female foeticide. This is further affecting the already adverse sex ratio.

This is an indicator of the low status of women in the society, who, right from birth, are denied equitable access to nutrition, health care services, educational and employment opportunities and so remain in a forced dependency situation throughout life. In such a cultural milieu, women are largely confined to the home and are even denied the freedom to make their own reproductive choices. The "Beyond family planning" approaches consisting of emphasis on measures such as age at marriage, female literacy, employment and status of women and old age security etc. must, therefore, be incorporated into the strategy to empower women to make responsible decisions in the interest of their own reproductive health and the health of the future generation.

In a predominantly agricultural rural economy children continue to be an asset, and are valued as additional labour for herding, minor field jobs, home-based industry and to fetch scarce fuel wood, water and other forest produce, much needed for their subsistence.

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ON the supply side, the reasons for the absence of real reproductive freedom to the rural women include:

- Restricted options of contraceptive methods;
- Erratic supply of contraceptive and frequent breakdown in logistics,
- Incomplete knowledge of all aspects of contraceptive methods, their indications/contra-indications, side effects and their management;
- Illogical spatial location of FP centres, communication barriers, time and wage lost in travelling and waiting time,
- Non-availability of the irregular visits of FP staff to service centres;
- Far from desirable quality of FP services rendered, and the callous attitude of FP workers, quite apart from lack of appropriate skills in counselling.

In the four decades since independence, India has successfully created an impressive health and family planning infrastructure with over 1.5 lakhs outlets (1992) consisting of subcentres, Primary Health Centres and Community Health Centres etc. for delivering family planning service. There are about 3.8 lakhs (1990) doctors trained in modern medicine and family planning service delivery and a comparatively higher number of physicians of the indigenous systems who have the potential to deliver reversible contraceptive services. There is a virtual army of over 2.5 lakhs (1990) auxiliaries/para-medics also trained in contraceptive communication and conventional contraceptive service delivery.

But, unfortunately, the credibility of this massive workforce has been undermined because of the poor quality of training, inadequate knowledge of the full range of specific contraceptive methods, lack of counselling and inter-personal communication skills and the undue pressure to meet the unrealistic sterilisation targets. The existing family planning facilities are very much under-utilised because of the inadequate quality of services, poor accessibility and frequent break-down in the logistics. Eventually, the Family Planning Programme is paying a high price for inadequacy of services resulting in unacceptably high drop-out rates and public resistance to governmental Information, Education and Communication (IEC) efforts.

Considering the fact that the Indian society is largely rural, poor and traditional; the Family Planning Programme, far from being a failure, has, indeed, achieved a fairly significant fertility decline. An estimated 118 million (1990) births have been averted in the programme life of about 40 years. Despite political instability, frequent changes in programme leadership, a highly conservative medical profession, a rigid bureaucracy and highly centralised programme, a number of States (including Maharashtra, Punjab, Gujarat, Kerala and Tamilnadu) have achieved small family size. Fertility rates in these States have fallen considerably between the early sixties and mid-eighties and average number of children in Kerala during the same period came down from five to 2.4. Intensified Family Planning efforts along with social development efforts in the Hindi belt where almost half of India's population resides, can well bring about the demographic transition that has already taken place in the other States.

However, one thing is certain; if the Family Planning Programme is to have any impact on moderating fertility in the demographically sluggish States, the programme will have to get out of its entrenched ways and become sensitive to the reproductive needs of the millions of rural couples. The rural family planning strategies need to be responsive to and resilient enough to support the chosen paths of the rural couples to manage risks and outcomes of their own reproductive behaviour.

An estimated 155 million (1990) eligible couples need access to reliable, affordable and acceptable contraception by 1995. Universal access to a broad range of reversible contraceptives of good quality is the most critical step towards increasing the effective contraceptive use from the current levels of 43.3 per cent (1990). Of this, 30.1 per cent were protected by sterilisation; 6.3 per cent IUD; five percent by conventional contraceptives; by 1.9 per cent by oral pills.

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A national survey in 1988 found that the latent demand was very high, almost a fifth of couples in the child-bearing age (some 25 million couples). These are the couples who did not want any more children, yet are not using any contraception. These, I believe, are predominantly the rural couples who do not have good access or cannot surmount the social barriers to contraception. Universal access to a broad range of reversible, non-invasive contraceptives of good quality is the most critical step towards increasing the effective contraceptive use from the current level of 43.3 percent to 60-70 per cent by 1995.

The demand for reliable, affordable and acceptable contraception by 1995 is estimated to be around 155 million couples. Currently, out of the 45 per cent of the 142 million eligible couples who are using contraceptives, 40 per cent couples are using modern contraceptives, and about five per cent traditional methods, but 70 per cent of these have chosen sterilisation – mostly females – in rural areas.

Given the rapid increase projected in the number of couples of child-bearing age, if this 60-70 per cent target is to be realistically achieved, what is called for at the highest level of the government is a strong and consistent political commitment which is evidenced not merely by 'words' but by 'actions', demonstrable in the allocation of adequate resources to the programme. The current outlays for the eighth. Five Year Plan of Rs 6500 crores is far too inadequate. Certainly bilateral and international assistance can play a useful catalytic role in tackling the problem.

Though there is a constraint on internal financial resources, it is not deemed a major handicap. India is rich in human resources. Every village and community has its potential change-agents. A resurgence of the masses is apparent; people are becoming aware everywhere that the government cannot fulfil all their aspirations; that the communities can organise themselves for bringing about change. Rural family planning strategies then should capitalise on this new awareness and invest in programmes of social mobilisation and leadership development.

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TRAINING of village-level health and development volunteer workers has been a very successful strategy with a number of voluntary agencies, for many years in India. Somehow, the Community Health Guide (CHG) Scheme, in which a total of 416,672 CHGs have been trained, failed to deliver the goods. The scheme may be resuscitated, energised, re-packaged and re-launched as a comprehensive social marketing strategy to include contraceptives, simple medicines, delivery kits, ORS ARI, etc.; charging a small fee for service and marginal profits on retail sales.

There are several traditional birth attendants (out of which 599,556 are trained) in every community who enjoy the confidence of the people. An effective training programme of all such existing TBAs with a continuing contact programme is the priority rural family welfare strategy. This will not merely upgrade their natal and other skills but enable them to serve as depot-holders in a community-based distribution programme as conventional and traditional family planning workers.

The recent child survival and safe motherhood initiatives are directed towards the TBAs and the health functionaries to upgrade their surveillance and screening skills to use the risk approach to maternal and child health. This is an effort to bring down neo-natal mortality and pregnancy losses, to contain infant mortality and promote child survival. Ensuring the health and life of the child born will alone motivate the mother to accept the terminal methods. The new baby-friendly initiatives to reinforce traditional breast feeding are really attempts to promote natural spacing in addition to ensuring child survival.

Besides, in the rural development, social welfare, agriculture, veterinary and other related sectors there are a multitude of government functionaries and extension agents whose services are not integrated. A strategy that effectively converges on local village leadership, enabling them to engineer social and economic development within their own communities is currently being tried out by some established non-government organisations. The lessons learnt from such experience could be put together as the new programme of convergence of basic services is being implemented.

Concerted action for women's reproductive health should take into account infertility, sexually transmitted diseases, including the threat of AIDS and a host of other diseases that women are particularly vulnerable to. Family counselling centres should form the backbone of the Family Welfare Programme, providing counselling on adolescent sexuality, genetic and premarital counselling, family planning guidance including advice on right and healthy life styles.

Communication efforts should be directed towards adolescents, newly married and young mothers, in an effort to promote delayed marriage and child-bearing as well spacing. The cafeteria approach to family planning should provide several alternatives to choose from and allow switching from one method to the other, depending upon the different phases of the woman's reproductive life cycle.

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IN order to improve the quality of services and credibility of health and family welfare infrastructure, qualitative upgradation of existing training infrastructure, development of such infrastructure wherever it does not exist, bestowing a status on training infrastructure, trainers and training processes and coupling of linkages between training, research and service components of the entire delivery system will have to be given more attention. It is these inputs which can make a difference in the manner in which services can be delivered to the people by the personnel who maintain continuity and consistency and are committed for this cause.

A strong research base has been laid but more investment needs to be made in research and development to develop a whole range of culturally acceptable reversible yet effective contraceptives. The research-industry interface as well as the research-policy interface needs to be strengthened to reduce the product cycle period.

The government's family welfare plan of action for the nineties may be an excellent document in terms of policies and strategies, but if it is to be implemented at the grassroot level, it needs to be done with techno-managerial efficiency. The country has an abundance of technical and managerial expertise which has successfully advanced the fields of nuclear and space technology, computers, and communications, etc. India has the capacity to make a grand success of the family welfare programme provided that every concerned person in this land, joins in the effort to make it happen. This is an effort to mobilise public opinion and support for improving the quality of life of our population. ■

Analysing Premadasa Visit

P. SAHADEVAN

“Short and sweet”. This is how the Sri Lankan President, Ranasinghe Premadasa, chose to describe his recent visit to India (October 1-3,1992). It was “short” in the sense that he spent only three days in India to transact his official business with the Indian leaders and to visit the State of Bihar. The visit was also a “sweet” one because the Indian leaders deliberately discussed off the record, the bilateral issue of the status of the Indo-Lanka Agreement of 1987, owing to the fact that he visited India in his capacity as the SAARC Chairman. Interestingly enough, the other tendentious bilateral issue – the extradition of the LTTE leaders, V.Prabhakaran and Pottu Amman, for trial in the Rajiv Gandhi assasination case – was not discussed at all.

This is, however, not to say that India did not express its own views on certain issues bearing on Indo-Lanka relations. For instance, President Shankar Dayal Sharma and Prime Minister Narasimha Rao reiterated India's commitment to uphold the validity of the 1987 Agreement in resolving the ethnic crisis, and stressed the need for “effective devolution of powers” to the Provincial Councils to fulfil the “legitimate aspirations” of the Sri Lankan Tamil community. The message, – through such an expression – conveyed to the Sri Lankan President was that India was not an unconcerned irrelevant party in the island's ethnic crisis, and that its present ‘low-key approach’ marked by a non-confrontationist attitude should not be construed as indifference towards the problems of the Sri Lankan Tamils.

That President Premadasa was least interested in discussing the controversial bilateral issues was evident from his banquet speech, which he devoted only to matters important to the SAARC. However, when the Indian Prime Minister raised the issue of resolving the ethnic crisis in his closed-door meeting with him, the Sri Lankan President put forth his country's own point of view. While Premadasa stressed his Government's commitment to devise a “peaceful negotiated settlement” of the ethnic crisis, the Indian side insisted that such a settlement should be “fair and equitable” which should meet the “legitimate aspirations” of the Tamils. Furthermore, apart from registering a success in avoiding a direct reference to the “status of the 1987 Agreement” in the joint communique, the Sri Lankan President got India's endorsement for the continuation of operations by security forces in the North-East of the island which, according to him, were “necessary for the protection of innocent civilians”, presumably from the LTTE.

The author is a Senior Research Scholar, Centre for South Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

The questions which arise here are: is the Sri Lankan Army's operations in the North-East basically to safeguard the interest of the innocent civilians? Are the people of North-East(especially the Tamils) vulnerable to the LTTE's attack alone?

President Premadasa's statement on the principal purpose of military operations in the North-East included in the joint communique, is misleading. It is well known that the Sri Lankan Army is engaged in a war with the LTTE mainly with a view to preserving the Sri Lankan state and creating a congenial atmosphere for the resolution of the ethnic crisis after liquidating the LTTE militancy. In the process, the specific task of protecting the civilians becomes a secondary job of the Army. This is evident from the Army's inability to stop several killings of the Muslims and the Sinhalese by the LTTE, and the counter-killings of the Tamils by the militant Sinhalese and Muslims in the past.

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ALSO, there is no denying the fact that the people of the North-East dare not oppose the LTTE for fear of losing their lives and property and, hence, submit to their rules of governance at places. Tigers have been intolerant of any rival groups functioning in the Jaffna peninsula, and of the articulation of dissidence and anti-LTTE sentiments. This is evident from the fact that the LTTE has denied the people their political rights and suppressed their freedom of speech. Furthermore, it was alleged that the LTTE was imprisoning people who failed to make payments to the Tigers and mercilessly liquidating those who opposed them.

The point here is that the people of the North-East are not only the victims of the LTTE terrorism but also of the Sri Lankan Army which, in the past, destroyed Tamil villages in the name of fighting the war against the LTTE. Besides, on several occasions, the military personnel killed the innocent Tamils of North-East in vengeance against the killing of soldiers by the LTTE. One such incident took place in August 1992, when armed men raided a village near Poonani in Batticaloa in the Eastern Province and massacred about twentyfive Tamils. This followed the killing of ten top-ranking army and navy men, including Major General Denzil

Kobbekaduwa in a landmine blast on Kayts island off Jaffna peninsula.

Further, Premadasa's expression of "commitment to peaceful settlement" of the ethnic crisis sounds rhetorical. The 45-member Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC), through which the Sri Lankan Government is trying to forge a solution, has been, by and large, regarded as a farce in the island. When the leaders of the eight non-LTTE Tamil groups and the Sri Lankan Muslim Congress met President Premadasa in June 1992 on the issue of the Tamils' demand for the permanent merger of the Northern and the Eastern Provinces into one administrative unit, he was reported to have assured them that the ruling United National Parrty (UNP), despite its anti-merger stance expressed in the last parliamentary election manifesto, would accept a "consensus" if the PSC is able to evolve one. But the question which confronts the Tamil leaders is how to arrive at a "consensus", particularly in a situation where the dominant Sinhala parties – the UNP and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) – are the 'prisoners' of Sinhalese votes.

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THAT both the parties are using the ethnic issue for one-upmanship is evident from their non-committal role in the PSC. For instance, with the (often) large-scale absence of the UNP and the SLFP members who have packed up 23 and 12 seats respectively in the PSC, quorum has been a problem at many of its meetings. But the Committee Chairman, Mangala Moonesinghe (an SLFP MP) is able to keep the exercise going with the support of the Tamil and Muslim parties which account for only 10 members in the PSC. More importantly, leaders of only these groups have so far submitted concrete proposals on the merger issue and on the devolution of powers to the Provincial Councils.

At the same time, feeling vulnerable to the political sniping from the Opposition, the UNP has not spelt out any proposals to reach a consensus on the merger issue. Instead, President Premadasa wants the SLFP to take the initiative to work out such a consensus. But the SLFP, on its part, prefers to know the stand of the UNP before it puts forward its proposals on the merger issue. If the UNP adopts an anti-merger stance, the SLFP will not take a risk antagonising the majority Sinhala opinion on this major plank. The SLFP also alleged that the Government was not interested in coming out with a political solution to the ethnic crisis, but only trying to pick holes in the arguments and the proposals of the Opposition. SLFP does not obviously want to let the UNP take any advantage of the consensus formula worked out by the Opposition. In reply, President Premadasa assured the Opposition that if a consensus is evolved at the instance of the Opposition leaders, "he would not only make a public declaration, but also state in the UNP election manifesto that it was possible to solve this crisis beacuse of the efforts of the Opposition
and the entire credit was due to it....." Such a stanc
the UNP and the SLFP leaders shows the politicisat
of the complex national issue and ethnicisation of
Sri Lankan politics.

Finally, President Premadasa's visit to India clea
all speculations about the Sri Lankan governm
attitude towards the LTTE after its proscription by
Indian government. His statement that Colombo wo
be prepared to initiate a peace dialogue with the LT
if it "stops the use of arms, agress to join the democr
process and elections," represents a shift in its polic
the past. When the LTTE declared an unilateral ce
fire in January 1991, the Premadasa administration
forth two major conditions. First, negotiations wo
be conducted only with V. Prabhakaran himself
not with the People's Front of Liberat
Tigers(PFLT), a political wing of the LTTE. Seco
ly, talks should be preceded by a declaration aga
the possession and use of arms by the LTTE. S
render of arms was not insisted at that time.
seeking negotiations directly with the LTTE supre
the Sri Lankan Government hoped to circumvent
problem it faced in June 1990 when the PFLT did
talking while the LTTE armed itself. Now, the
Lankan Government does not seem to be insisting
more on these two conditions. The adoption of su
moderate stance seems to have been guided by
current strategic environment in the North-East, wh
the Army recently recived some setbacks in the op
tions against the LTTE. The Defence Ministry of
Lanka calculated that on an average a hundred sold
were dying every month in the war with the LTTE.

At present, what is lacking in the context of
settlement of the ethnic crisis in the island is b
initiatives and genuine interest on the part of the U
government. This is precisely what seems to be miss
on Colombo's part. New Delhi has to reckon with t
position in any exhortation of the solution of the Ta
question in the North-East of the Island, whose integ
it is Committed to.

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Changing Perspective of Social Work

MEHER C. NANAVATTY

s social work ambulatory, ameliorative and rehabilita ive, helping people to adjust to the prevailing social milieu by strengthening the ing mechanism of individuals and groups? Or, is it elopmental? Or still further, is it's role one of kening and conscientisation to enable people to ngthen their own capacity to demand their right to fare and developmental services in a democratic iety?

Behind such questioning lies the conviction that ially created diseases should be socially cured, and ocacy and activism should become an instrument of ial work in promoting services for the deprived the ginalised and the "real poor" population of the ld.

These and allied questions were discussed at four national conference held in Septmeber 1992, is at hington D.C. Interesting enough all four organisa- s, including Inter-University Consortium on Social elopment, International Congress of Schools of So- Work, International Federation of Social Workers International Council on Social Welfare, came to d conclusions that professional social work should more confine exclusively to strengthening coping hanism of individuals and groups through counsell- to adjust to the existing socio-economic and political em thus, becoming the "confirming arm of ad- istration, but participate actively in strengthening further promoting the process of development in all ntries, especially the developing and the least eloped.

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IS role has to be played through reorganising the hbourhood communities through the use of com- ity organisations and working with groups and ngthening people through conscientisation, and kening in them the desire to demand the human t to social security including basic services of health nutirition, education and welfare. Removal of erty and promotion of social change should be the n objective and advocacy—the main tool of social k—while working with the people. This acquires question of priority of attention in addition to the vision of basic human services for all people in the eloping countries of the world.

Although different conferences traversed different paths of deliberation, examining the major problems of poverty among the people throughout the world, they tracked down similar realism, so succinctly and picturously presented by Kofi N. Awoonor, Ambassador of Ghana and Chairperson of the Group of 77 in the UN in his key-note address at the twentysixth Congress of International Association of Schools of Social Work.

> By nightfall today, over 40,000 children will die the world over largely from intestinal disorder; four million people will die by the end of this year from diarrhoeal ailments; 1 3 billion have no access to safe drinking water; 2 3 billion people worldwide live without access to sanitation services, 136 million live in areas afflicted with desert conditions under which barely anything grows And in that Third World, the developing or under developed portion of our planet, where these figures are realities of everyday existence, life expectancy ranges from 42 to 63 if you are lucky.
>
> The rich North comprising of 25 per cent of the world's population, in contrast, earns 85 per cent of the world's income whilst the poor made up of 75 per cent of the global population receive the remaining 15 per cent.
>
> Besides, with five per cent of the world's population consumes 25 per cent of the fossil fuel burned annually, 33 per cent of paper, 24 per cent of the aluminium and 13 per cent of the fertiliser. A child born into a typical middle class home in that country will, in his or her lifetime, consume over 12,000 paper grocery bags, drive more than 700,000 miles in an automible, and burn more than 28,000 gallons of gasoline in doing so. This same person will, in his or her lifetime wear and discard 250 shirts or upper garments, 115 pairs of shoes, purchase 12 automobiles, and discard over 110,250 pounds of trash.
>
> In the final analysis, it is social and economic issues that will determine the nature of the global polity in which we all live And in search of that policy we must seek answers to fundamental issues such as equity, fairness, justice, equality and humanity. These, as abstract as they may sound, are reducible to such bare facts as food, shelter, health, education No democracy, or a new world order, constructed on the present given global reality in wich the rich take from the poor, will endure this. Any democracy, that cannot feed, clothe and keep all its people in health is a terribly flawed democracy. Any democracy that promotes a racial, poverty or so-called under-class divide, is not worth the paper which its constitution is written.

These were inspiring realisations for the delegates to the conferences to imbibe. Similar realisation, but in a different context, was highlighted by Stephen Lewis, a journalist from Canada and a member of the UNICEF Board. While delivering the key-note address at the World Assembly of the International Federation of Social Workers, he declared that the debt of the developing countries to the IMF was depriving the children of these countries of their food and nutrition, health and welfare. How can the countries that earn an average of 250 dollars per capita pay back the loans of credit that ranged from 1 to 1.3 trillian dollars? The propelling greed of the North deprives children of the South their very existence. How can indebted countries provide children their basic needs of food, nutrition and health, to which the UNICEF and UN are wedded? As Kafi Awoonor asked, "how can the world endure half poor and half rich, half starved and half over-fed, half unclothed and half fully dressed?"

After such a clarion call, which social work delegate can continue to remain ameliorative and the promoter of the existing socio, economic and political system of his/her country?

The Inter University Consortium discussed, major issues of social development and how social work can assume the mantle of development. More than hundred academic treatises were discussed out of which fifty per cent were related to the subjects like market economy and social develoment, intregrating social justice in social work practice, social work and the new world order, charity or justice-perception for donors, urbanisation as a dilemma of development, ideological roots of social development, empowering women for societal development, ethnic conflicts and social development, and the like.

More than three hundred social scientists, social work educators and social development workers participated in the delibrations for four days. The consortium has extended its network to European countries, including East Europe, but not as effectivelly in the developing countries as conceived by its founding fathers.

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THE Congress of International Federation of Social Workers was a grand show at Washington Convention Centre with fanfare and colours singing "We are the world". More than a thousand delegates attended varied programmes of deliberation enabling them to focus their attention on areas of their specialisation as well as engaged in dialogue on social welfare policies and human welfare by strengthening families, developing human capital, enhancing empowerment, consideration of ways of dealing with the impact of conflicts, violence, war and disaster and substance abuses. The meetings deliberated on challenges of demographic explosion, neo-colonialism and exploitation-free new world order. Five days of deliberation covered hundreds of papers, and a number of symposia, workshops and institutions. The deliberation at the Congress of Schools of Social Work, by its very constituents, related primarily to the teaching of social work education in the universities and schools of social work and improvement of their curricular context to equip students to relate to social change and development and prepare for ushering in a new economic order. More than three hundred academic papers, analysing the contexts of social work education were discussed by more than five hundred delegates for four days.

Most outstanding feature of the Congress was the key-note address by Kofi N. Awoonor on "The New World Order,Social Realities in Developing Countries and Global Security" and the concluding address by Leena Dominelli on "European Unity, Opportunity or Opportunism". The Congress also honoured Dr Armaity Desai, Director, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Bombay, India, with Katherine Kondell Award for being the best international social work educator. It was indeed a proud day for the Indian delegates and schools of social work in India.

The fourth organisation, the Indian Council on Social Welfare, which is less militant than the other three mentioned earlier, held a symposium on the "Future of ICSW", analysing its past performance, its achievements and pitfalls and draw backs and recommended that the Council should become a more militant organisation giving attention to the social welfare problems of the developing countries promoting advocacy role for social change and development.

●

THUS, four conferences provided the visitors a feast of thoughts to carry back home. In the words of Kofi N. Awoonor, the deliberations recognised the work of different international, voluntary non-governmental social work education and social welfare organisations and appealed to them to be more active in the advocacy of the deprived popualtion of the world. He urged them to be the new missionaries for social and economic justice acquiring centrestage in the global crusade against social oppression stating "we do not ask for charity. Charity cannot answer our needs; we are not poor because we are less hard working; no one is poor, hungry, homelss because he or she is stupid." He concluded by saying; "It is our sacred belief that human rights begin with the fundamentals that sustain life itself. Freedom and liberty become a loomingly distant abstraction for a person who is homeless, sick and hungry. We will sleep more peacefully if we release the poor, the sick, the helpless and the illiterate from the burdens imposed upon them by our history and collective neglect."

How far these deliberations, the stimulation for assuming the role of advocacy and awakening in favour of the teeming millions of the world, who are marginalised, will influence social workers and social work educators back home in India and what they will do to change the senario of social work education and social welfare, however remains to be seen. ■

IMPRESSIONS

What does it Mean to Live in Modern India?

AVIJIT PATHAK

How should one live? What should be one's social practice, morality and ethics? One tends to raise these questions not for any academic reason. The fact is that living in modern India is no easy proposition. As ideals collapse and existence gets reduced into an opportunistic game for survival, the question of *meaning* assumes added significance. Because for all those not yet adjusted to the prevailing void, a meaning of existence ought to be evolved. It is necessary to have faith in one's being, in one's mode of existence. What is, however, ironic is that this necessary faith is becoming increasingly difficult to restore. There is no meaning anywhere. And this *meaninglessness* can be seen in what characterises modern India: all-pervasive corruption, violence and instrumental religiosity.

A look at these 'structural' realities, let it be stated, requires a biographical approach. Corruption or violence can no longer be seen as a pathology limited to the political realm only; its visible presence in everyday life affects one's being, one's social relationships, one's priorities. In other words, without that intense biographical sensitivity it is impossible to realise — and realise authentically — the danger of the disenchanted world we are living in. That's why, it is necessary to *feel*, to grow sensitive, to experience the prevailing madness. Only then is it possible to know our fate, rescue ourselves from insanity and create a new India not at all ignorant of her higher principles of existence.

The need of the hour, as we have already said, is to see oneself as a *responsible person*, not a reified citizen watching mega-corruption and mega-violence and spectacles. The need is to experience these pathologies in one's own existence and raise the voice of protest. Rebellion is therapy. And rebellion is impossible without having faith in existence, in a meaningful social order. Before we explore the nature and possibility of such a rebellion, it is desirable to have a look at the phenomenology of the three vices we have just talked about: corruption, violence and instrumental religiosity.

I

Corruption, as we see its democratisation, its universalisation, robs the community of its notion of the *sacred*. The increasing denial of the sacred, it is not difficult to realise, is prone to anarchy, meaninglessness, chaos and confusion. No society, however secular it is, can survive without having its own realm of the sacred. Because the realm of the sacred — the realm of these higher/nobler principles and institutions, persons and practices — keeps one's faith in life, in the potential strength everyone is gifted with to realise mankind's epic dreams. In other words, the meaning of existence requires its close affinity with the sacred.

But, as we have already said, corruption with its ugliest manifestation, in contemporary India, denies the sacred. Now everything is possible, Ministers and parliaments, professors and religious leaders, intellectuals and people with awards, prizes and honours — everyone can prove to be corrupt, ugly, nasty; In other words, one lesson that modern India teaches everyone is that there is no assurance anywhere. The brutality of the profane has colonised the sacred. Life is what it is — money and gambling, power and profit!

As the sacred dissolves into nothingness and all that is supposed to be 'higher' proves to be empty, there is invariably a crisis of faith. Imagine the fate of living in a world in which, everyday, one is asked to realise that there is no God, no saint, no revolutionary, no hero; instead, there is only one thing that matters — money as a great *seducer* before which neither can retain its autonomy and dignity!

This legitimisation crisis does another damage. It breeds cynicism; never does it allow to look at others with faith and hope. As one takes for granted that everyone in this cursed land can prove to be corrupt, the relationship between self and others becomes absolutely instrumental and manipulative. To get things done, as the opinion goes, one must know how the world really functions: commodification of life, power of money, temptation of immediate material gains. It is futile to have faith — faith that a teacher would teach his students, a doctor would cure his patients, a police officer would take care of the citizen's security. Faith or trust is important. When nothing works, money alone can do everything. It can perform miracles. So, man knows where he should go: not government schools, but teaching shops: not public hospitals, but costly 'nursing' homes. This is pragmatism *—free, spontaneous, communicative interaction.*

That is not all. The worst damage that corruption does is that man loses faith in himself, denies his own possibility. He tends to feel that not solely the other is corrupt: he himself is prone to it, the solidity of corruption in everyday existence, he fears, he cannot resist. To survive, one tells oneself, is to accept the popular commonsense, accept its rationalisation. This growing helplessness before corruption has affected us so severely that one can see it even amongst the younger generation. Dreams die, ideals collapse and our 'practical' young men believe that corruption is bound to prevail; nothing can be done about it !

That is the danger. One calls it pathology; yet one calls it normal. In other words, one sees oneself as sick and morbid, yet rational and calculative. With this schizoid existence, salvation becomes an impossibility. With the all-pervasive corruption, almost all of us have begun to see ourselves as fractured/fragmented beings incapable of fighting the commodification of life, the marketisation of our possibilities.

Life cannot be lived meaningfully with such self-hatred, disgust and pity.

II

Like corruption violence too is an important constituent of contemporary social reality. The normalisation of violence or its easy acceptance in our times is striking. As violence tends to become the only mode of articulation in conflict-resolution, the possibility of *dialogical communities* begins to disappear from our social practices. Doubtless, this is a great loss. Because dialogue is the primary prerequisite for the existence of a meaningful community in which men understand one another, give their consent to a shared practice. Dialogue means faith in life, in unity, in love. With the end of dialogue and the consequent triumph of violence, one's understanding of social-existence undergoes a drastic transformation. There is no art of listening, one argues. Democracy is pretence; life is perpetual war! To get things done one must destroy, annihilate others. Are we taking it for granted that man is too closed a machine, never does he open up and embrace others?

Ironically, in modern India we are living with this doubt and skepticism. We are doubting not solely the state or the terrorist, the capitalists or the workers, the landlords or the *Dalits*. We are doubting ourselves—our own possibilities. In a terribly violent universe it is becoming increasingly difficult to have faith in any power except that of brute force. As a result, one is seldom encouraged to cultivate one's soul-force, the potency of love. Life, without the technologies of violence, one tells oneself, is not worth-living. The teacher as well as the psychiatrist, the bureaucrat as well as the father, the technocrat as well as the policeman—everyone, it is argued, should have an access to the technologies of violence, to the science of instrumental reason. What is taken for granted is the asymmetry of relationships. Equality or participation or dialogue gets reduced into an empty ideal. To equate truth with power, and power with violence is to rob the world of its deeper meaning. The state the terrorists, our routinised violence in everyday existence—everything seems to indicate that we in contemporary India are passing through a chaotic stage of meaninglessness.

With this meaninglessness each of us acquire a strange capacity to distort everything. The striking example is the way we now define peace. Peace, for us, is a *military construct*; it is born out of fear; it is the domination of the mighty over the weak; it is latent violence; The tragedy of contemporary culture is that we can no longer visualise a harmonic existence in which peace is born out of intense relationships, dialogue, communication, mutuality and love. That's why, with our wounded psyche, each 'law and order' problem, we tend to believe, has got only one solution—hard, military solution. Communalism or ethnicity, terrorism or students'unrest—it is the army that alone can restore peace !

The easiness with which we accept the growing militarisation of the society reveals our decadence, our insensitivity to death, insurgency, murder, violence. It is now possible for us to reduce humanity into abstract categories like 'agents of the state' or 'terrorists'. Their deaths, therefore, do not surprise us; shock us. Their deaths are only statistics!

The reification of death and the militarisation of the society go together. And we find ourselves caught in a world without any exit. That is modern India.

III

Another tragedy of contemporary culture is its religion, its speedy transformation, its enhanced thickness. But we all know, religion, a deeply meaningful experience, should prevail for an altogether different reason—not for power-politics, but for salvation; not for one's preoccupation with the fleeting and the transitory, but for transcendence. This requires explanation.

With the growing secularisation of the world, religion, it is obvious, loses its importance. Secular education or what we call science preoccupied with the dynamics of the phenomenal world—demystifies religion, its beliefs and premises, its institutions and elites, its rituals and dogmas. The positive contributions of secular education notwithstanding, it despiritualises the mind. That is the danger. Because religion as a spiritual quest tells us an entirely different story. Far from remaining fixated to dogmas and prejudices, it seeks to provide a meaning to existence: a meaning that every sensitive being needs in order to evolve a point of mediation between life and death, the finite and the infinite, history and transcendence. In other words, without that spiritual quest life loses its depth.

A depthless existence means one's preoccupation with merely the temporal, mind incapable of comprehending the limits of the finite: death, suffering, pain, separation, misery. A depthless existence is a meaningless existence prone to violence, brutality and narcissistic pride. Ironically, secularism, its liberation dimensions notwithstanding, has not been able to alter this meaninglessness. That's why, we require the spiritualisation of the mind; we require a religion capable of restoring that lost meaningful experience.

As we have already said, the kind of religion we see in contemporary India is incapable of spiritualising the mind. Instead, we see how religion, far from retaining its spirituality, has embraced the crude logic of power politics. As a matter of fact, we see once again the domination of *totalising politics*: the way it enters every realm of existence and, then, kills its autonomy. Religion, therefore, forgets its spiritual concerns. It allows itself to be used a political tool, as a technology of political 'violence'. Religion loses its emanicipatory reason, something that man needs to cross the wall, the wall that separates this 'iron cage' from the world of unboundedness, eternity, permanence, truth. Religion begins to celebrate the same instrumental reason. Power, wealth, possessiveness and calculation become its sole objectives. With this religion, as we are experiencing, there is no positive expansion of the mind. Instead, it classifies and hierarchises us, it makes us sectarian and possessive. With this religion we deny our possibilities everyday. That is the fate of modern India; religion is another killer!

The uglification of religion can be seen in one's everyday religious practice. An intense moment of solitude, an exclusively private moment of prayer, a metaphysical moment of wonder, clarity and humbleness – all that rescues religion from the noise of the world – is dying. In modern India, as everyone can see, religious moments are *thick moments* full of noise and violence.

Religious rituals and festivals demonstrate the power of wealth and money. A religious occasion, far from spiritualising man, creates a situation conducive to the emergence of a crowd: *mindless, soulless* and always eager to find its *other* in order to destroy it, annihilate it. The massification of religion is its ultimate tragedy. It loses its calmness and purity. It is now gorgeous. It advertises itself; the gods are the gods of the market place !

That's why, the question: where should one go? As religion becomes purely instrumental, life in contemporary India loses another opportunity to evolve a meaning, to invent a radical practice.

It is darkness all around.

IV

Before we explore the possibility of an alternative life practice to come out from this all-pervasive darkness, it is perhaps necessary to examine the social construction of contemporary reality. To begin with, it is possible to see corruption as a symptom of scarcity. And scarcity is inevitable because the political economy that rules us is divisive: unevenness is the primary principle. Living, for the majority, is never free from the perpetual anxiety born out of continual inflation and increasing price rise. Under these circumstances, corruption – an urge to earn money through illegitimate means – becomes a necessity. Corruption is survival !

That is, however, not the complete answer to the problem. Because corruption, we all know, is not just for mere survival. It is for an *induced ambition* to achieve a life-style – a life-style largely constructed by the culture-industry, the extraordinary emphasis it attaches to the proliferation of desires and images. As capitalism, in the post-Nehruvian era further modernises itself, it creates a new middle class: aggressive and willing to be seduced by the images of instant success, power and glory. What we call consumerism is precisely this. Consumerism creates new needs and induces artificial poverty. This leads to corruption. Because corruption is an aggressive urge to fulfill the ever-growing new needs and, therefore, become rich. In other words, corruption is becoming normal because India has chosen to accept the language of hegemonic capitalism, the way it equates life with unlimited consumption. Corruption and the dreams of the new middle class have to be seen together.

Violence, it is obvious, is an important part of this worldview. Domination or exploitation is its primary principle. An orientation that emphasises only the instrumental relationship with everything – be it nature or society – denies all that is needed for peace: understanding, tolerance, communication, sharing. A life that knows no restraint is invariably violent.

Not solely that. It is a world in which one witnesses an eternal conflict between one's needs and one's resources. As, for many, there is always an incompatibility between the intensification of desires and that of resources, violence becomes almost inevitable. Violence can be seen as a reaction, as a protest, as an expression of despair. It goes without saying that in modern India there are many unemployed young men and urban poor, whose violent, restless minds can always be used and manipulated to add to the prevailing chaos and anarchy.

A worldview having violence as its inherent principle explains the nature of the modern nation-state. It acts like a *patriarch* always justifying its coercive apparatus in the name of 'development' 'unity' and 'national security'. It is so constituted that it understands only violence. The state paradoxically, legitimises not solely its own violence; it legitimises the violence of even those who are protesting against it. Because the state bows down, proposes 'dialogue' only when violence is created. As our contemporary experience shows, the state humiliates peaceful demands and protests. Modern India sees this politics, transforms herself into a battlefield in which the state and its enemies are fighting continually, but never arriving at a real alternative. It is the same worldview – instrumental and manipulative – that characterises even the enemies of the state. The aim is power, power for the elites (local or universal). It is hardly for dialogue, for people, for relationship. That is the irony.

As power politics becomes the dominant reality, it affects even religion. Politics incorporates religion, despiritualises it. The religious war that we see in contemporary India is nothing but apolitical war having power as its sole objective – the power that classifies and hierarchises, the power that tempts and induces pleasure.

The plain truth is that it is a despiritualised world, an empty world.

V

To overcome this emptiness, as we have already suggested, one requires a meaning of existence. This is impossible without having faith in life. What should be the nature of this faith? Faith is a radical act. This requires man's faith in himself, in his ability to find the deeper meanings of existence in an altogether different zone: not in consumption, accumulation and possession but in love, communication and understanding. This means faith in the fact that man is more than what he is: his immediate boundary, his armour, his politics, status, pride.

This also requires a belief that the universe in which man finds himself is beautiful; to live is to relate to it, not to conquer it.

This *radical faith* need not necessarily be appreciated by the proponents of modernisation. Because modernisation as a worldview relies on an entirely different principle. It assumes man's supremacy in the world and hence his natural right to shape, modulate and manipulate nature according to his narcissistic will. It emphasises 'having' not 'being'. Its principle is victory, not prayer; instrumental reason, not communicative interaction; fragmentation, not holism; quantification of time, not its transcendence. This, however, does not mean that this modernisation project has got nothing positive to offer to mankind; in fact, its gains are enormous. The only point we are trying to state is that the radical faith we are speaking of does not deny modernity; it transcends it.

And it is this radical faith that alone can spiritualise the world, provide a meaning to existence. Only then is it possible to fight the empty would we have been confronting in modern India. Only then it is possible to gain the moral courage needed to resist corruption, violence and instrumental religiosity—the vices which, as we have already implied, have been intensified by the very logic of modernisation.

Yet, it is difficult to restore this radical faith. And this is ironical. Because unlike the West, India, we all know, did have a tradition of this faith. But what a fate! This 'spiritual' land of ours knows nothing but materialism, violence and aggressiveness. India has failed to resist—despite the glorious anti-colonial struggle she launched—modernisation's universalising tendencies, its hegemonic penetration. As a result, her tradition has already been robbed of her essence and the violence of mondernisation that a society in transition has to pass through has caused all that we have been seeing before our own eyes in contemporary India. Ironically, the dominant mainstream socio-political thinking has not yet saved itself from the materialistic dream of mondernisation.

That's why, radical faith as an emancipatory act is not easy to evolve. Yet, there is no reason to plead for social determinism. Cultural innovation is impossible without utopian experiments; cultural innovation requires morally courageous persons transcending the limits of the 'taken-for-granted' worldview.

Is it possible to feel, experience and act like a morally courageous person in modern India?

A question that haunts all of us. ■

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COMMUNICATION

Experience of Assembly Functioning

Recently a very high powered convention was held in Delhi to discuss ways and means to maintain decorum and discipline in the Parliament and the State Legislatures. It was not a day too late to hold such a convention.

About its outcome from the viewpoint of contribution towards achieving its goal, one has to keep one's fingers crossed. It seemed to have been mainly a one way traffic—why members must maintain discipline and decorum, why they must not indulge in stunts, cheap demagogy, reckless allegations, acrobatics of various types, etc., in order to catch the eye of the press and to get cheap publicity. All this may be and in fact is very necessary. I have no grudge on that account except that all this does not represent the entire truth. The Prime Minister while summing up the proceedings said if rules and regulations of the functioning of the Legislatures are strictly observed (by the members of course) every thing will be fine. This simple prescription overlooks a very important fact that not unoften rules are no conducive to proper and fully democratic functioning of the Assembly. Nor is that all: quite often the way they are interpreted and implemented results in curbing the rights of members and especially of Opposition and keep out matters inconvenient to the government.

The Budget Session of the newly constituted Punjab Legislative Assembly began towards the end of February,1992. Apart from what could be said during the omnibus discussions on the Governor's address and the Budget, a separate discussion on Punjab problem was the need of the hour. The CPI group gave notice of a non-official resolution which sought to recommend to the Government of India to announce a political package for Punjab. It was disallowed on the ground that it raised many issues and related to many departments. This was totally unjustified if one were to go by the spirit of the rules and their reasonable interpretation. The fact was that some one high-up did not want some sensitive issues to be raised in the Assembly.

Quite an important aspect of the Punjab problem has been police excesses against innocents. Such excesses undoubtedly bring grist to he mill of the terrorists. From time to time claims of strong action ncluding dismissal of police officers guilty of excesses for malafide reasons are made by the goverment. One would think that a question seeking information in this regard would be welcome unless the government had some skeletons in its cupboard to hide. The question given notice of by the leader of the CPI group was disallowed on the ground that "it is a sensitive question". In my opinion this again was a violation of rules of their spirit if not also he letter. In any case, refusal to admit the question was totally unjustified. If I were a member of the Assembly and the rejected question were mine, I would have certainly kicked up a row on the loor of the House.

The same lady member Vimla Dang had given notice of another tarred question. It sought information about "the number of perons killed by the terrorists after the present government took power" and "how many (of these) have been killed for voting in elections, for being polling agents, etc.". This question too was disallowed on the ground that "it relates to a sensitive matter and it may lead to arousing of feelings of different sections in the house, if nswered". It only needs to be pointed out that such questions are sked and answered in the Parliament without any negative effect. It is not difficult to find out the real reason.

Hardev Arshi and three other members of the CPI had jointly given notice of starred Question 143 seeking information about deaths in police custody in Punjab during the years 1990 and 1991 and about the results of enquiries held regarding the same. It was admitted but its turn did not come for reply. It was converted into an unstarred question in the list for April 9, 1992. Even seven months after the question, the reply has not been received. The Speaker seems helpless in making the Home Department/Office of the Chief Minister to send the reply to the Vidhan Sabha Secretariat. If such refusal for such a long time to such a question were to lead to some breaking of decorum, that should not be a surprise for any. In fact absence of protest in such a matter should cause not only surprise but also concern.

Another question which could not be admitted had sought information about plots alloted to Ministers and their kin by Chairmen of various Improvement Trusts in the State out of their discretionary quotas.

The next session of the Punjab Legislative Assembly was convened in July 1992. It was a two days affair. Demand of the entire Opposition to extend it was rejected. Even a meeting of the Business Advisory Committee was not held. The purpose of the Session was to enable members to be present to vote in the election for the Rashtrapati and to rush through a bill enhancing a good deal of allowances and facilities for Ministers and, Legislators. Much has been written about the manner in which this Bill was passed in gross violation of rules. This could be done because the entire house with some exceptions seemed interested in the passing of the bill at the earliest.

The Opposition was keen that the Punjab situation be discussed. To forestal Opposition initiative some from the Treasury benches managed to get their resolution admitted first. It sought to congratulate the Government for the improvement that had taken place. The CPI group gave notice of an amandment to this. The same was disallowed for which there was hardly any justification. That however, did not matter as it would not be possible to present opposition members to have their say even while speaking on the Congress-I resolution. However, as usually happens, the entire Oppositions staged a walk out to record protest just before the resolution was to be moved. In a quick move, the Minister for Parliamentary Affairs managed the withdrawal of the resolution a move which was resented even by some Congress-I MLAs. The opposition had allowed itself to be out maneovered and there was no discussion on Punjab- and this is precisely what the ruling party wanted at that very time.

An important matter had been just reported in the press. Fifteen days notice was just not possible. Vimla Dang therefore gave notice of a short notice question which the Speaker would admit only if the Minister concerned had no objection.

On June 22, 1992 or so, the Mohali police had registered a case under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities(Prevention) Act against some executives of JCT Electronics Ltd.—a Thapar concern. The case arose out of the fact that this management had got printed some threatening letters in the name of some terrorist outfit(s) and these were being sent to their trade Union leaders and also the Labour Courts etc. before whom their disputes with the labour were pending.

Only the State government could withdraw the case. A news had appeared in the press that the case had been withdrawn. It was a surprise. Withdrawal meant unwillingness on the part of the government to displease the Thapars, to say the least. There was all type of speculation in the press. It was in this background that the CPI MLA gave notice of a short notice question. If it had been disallowed on the ground that the Chief Minister being the Minister concerned had not agreed, it would have been bad but not in any way violative of rules. The question was disallowed on the ground that "it relates to an individual". Not a convincing reason to reject an important though inconvenient question. The question related not to any individual but the action of the government in withdrawing the case.

The MLA concerned desired reconsideration of his order by the Speaker. She seems to have been informed that the decision of the Speaker is final. I personally would think that the refusal to admit this question on a ground which does not hold any water would be good enough reason to have some protest in the Assembly.

What has been written above may be construed to imply some criticism of the Speaker. Maybe, but no disrespect is meant. I should also add that he prevented some situation taking an ugly turn by his tactful and flexible handling. He quite deservedly won tributes on more than one count like this.

That is no small matter because Speakers of the type which should be there and who could play the pivotal rule they are excepted to play in the functioning of parliamentary democracy are almost an extinct species. The Lok Sabha Speaker taking on the function of a party leader and allotting seats of its MPs drew much flak quite justifiably.

Prime Minister's recipe will not work. All should follow rules and regulation but these too should be genuinely democratic and must not be interpreted and implemented to suppress opposition. That will prove counter-productive. Be that as it may, Addresses by the President and the Governors should be very dignified occasions. Opposition parties must give up the unhealthy practices which have developed in connection with these. And of course, the Prime Minister was on very strong ground when he chided the Opposition for its frequent demand for dispensing with the Question Hour. It is not for nothing that Question Hour, once upon a time, used to draw big crowds in the visitors galleries.

Chhehaṛta, Punjab *Satya Pal Dang*

Structural Adjustment Policies and Women

Experience of South East Asia

S. UMA DEVI

The 1992 Union Budget presented by the Finance Minister in the wake of the Structural Adjustment Policies (SAP) carried out in India at the behest of the IMF and World Bank, meted out some concessions to working women earning below Rs 75,000/- per annum. Marginal though these concessions were, the Finance Minister highlighted these as a gesture to working women. Was it to give an impression that the SAP would be in favour of women? If that was the aim, it would be worth exploding this myth at the earliest. The experiences of the countries of South East Asia, which are projected as having been successful in carrying out the SAP has proved otherwise. The case of Hong Kong, Thailand, Philippines, Korea and Taiwan are quoted in this regard. Therefore, it would be worth looking into the condition of women in these countries after the SAP was carried out.

SAP has been considered successful in these countries because of the rapid increase in their GNP's and per capita income. Hence, it is pertinent to unveil the factors which led to their rapid rate of growth.

Take the case of Hongkong. She has very quickly established herself as the biggest textile and clothing exporter among the LDCs, notwithstanding the fact that her position is being threatened now by competition from South Korea, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia. In the 1970s, Hong Kong, Republic of Korea and India had together accounted for 85 per cent of clothing exports with Singapore, Pakistan, Brazil and Egypt catching up fast.

Dr Uma Devi is a Professor in the Department of Economics, University of Kerala, Trivandrum.

This should be viewed as part of the process of new international division of labour, characterised by a shift in industrial production from the highly industrialised countries to developing countries where labour conditions make it possible to undercut production costs.

One study reveals that in the last 15 years world production in textile and clothing industries has been characterised by industrial relocation from the industrialised to the developing countries. The increase in exports of garments from Hong Kong and other countries of Asia and South Asia took place simultaneously with a considerable decline in textile and clothing production in the EEC. Decline in production of these goods in the EEC led to a fall in employment in these sectors alongwith a decline in the share of exports of these goods. Infact, the EEC once a net exporter turned into a net importer of textiles and clothing.

The number of establishments in the EEC fell while there was a sharp increase in their numbers in the Newly Industrialising Countries (NICs). In the textile industry alone the EEC lost some 900,000 work places during the period 1960-77, which came to one third of all employment in the industry. Job losses in the clothing industry were less significant. As a whole the EEC lost 143,000 jobs in this sector between 1971-77. On the other hand, jobs in the textile land clothing industry in the NIC nearly doubled (in the case of Hong Kong) and trebled (in the case of Singapore).

Given the fact that more than 70 per cent of workers in the textile and clothing industry consist of women, a decline in female employment took place in the EEC while the reverse happened in the NICs. Those thrown out of this sector could not be absorbed — for example, in the electronics industry. One may ask, 'what is there to lament about it'? There are sufficient grounds for that, one being the motivation for such a relocation of the textile and clothing industry namely, exploitation of cheap women labour in the NICs.

Among the reasons sighted are the economic weakness of women, their social subordination, their ability to perform these monotonous repetitive activities, their lack of involvement in trade union activities which make it easier to manage and control them than men. Moreover, in the NICs women's labour tends to be cheaper than in the EEC, due to the fact that no social security benefits are given in the former.

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THE story of Korea is no different as another study shows. Since the Korean government embarked on export-led industrialisation in the early 1960's, women's labour force participation increased. In 1965 about 45 per cent of women aged 14 years or over were economically active, this increased to about 57 per cent in 1980. Increase in female labour force participation was greater in the farm sector (41 per cent to 53 per cent) while comparatively less in the non-farm sector (31 to 36 per cent). Proletarianisation of labour force was more for the females than for males.

The urban based export linked capital accumulation in contemporary Korea is expressed in the form of (a) sizeable increase of factory work in the city in which predominantly young single women were employed, (b) intensified agricultural work among rural women and (c) an increase in white collar jobs for a small proportion of women. Participation rates of single women in each age group is two to six times more than that of married women. Eightyeight per cent of working urban single women are wage workers while only 23 per cent of working urban married woman work for a wage as most of the latter are self-employed.

Besides, the textile and clothing industry another industry which has grown tremendously in South East Asian countries is tourism – again an industry which has led to increase in employment of women. A strong correlation has been found between development of tourist industry and the rise of prostitution in the Third World countries.

In 1982 more than one million Japanese tourists are supposed to have visited Thailand, the Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan and Hong Kong tours called 'trips for men only' which explicitly include visits to brothels.

The manifestation of prostitution has also undergone significant change. In place of bonded girls there are call girls, and the 'mail order brides'. The establishment of the US Military bases in Thailand and Vietnam had already led to the emergence of prostitution in these new forms.

Olangapo near the US naval base called the 'Liberty City' consists of rest and recreation network of more than 500 clubs, bars, restaurants, sauna baths and massage clinics run exclusively by women for a clientele consisting of men.

We present below in Table I and II an estimate of the income per year from prostitution. It further shows that the income from that activity is more attractive from any other.

Table I

Gross Income per year from Prostitution and from Alternative Forms of Employment : Different years in the Period (1974-1978) (US Dollars).

Korea	
Garment Industry	135 – 480
Prostitution in Seoul	4500 – 9000
Philippines	
Spinning and Weaving	580
Prostitution in Manila	850 – 3200
Prostitution in Ologapo	3375 – 5000
Thailand	
Restaurant Waitress	250
Battery Factory	312
Garment Industry	450
Prostitution in Bangkok	1875 – 18,000

Source: Truong Thanh-Dam, "The Dynamics of Sex Tourism : The Case of S.E. Asia", *Development and Change*, Vol.14, No.1,January '83.

Table II

Prostitutes Gross Revenue, Gross Income per deal (US dollars) and Gross Income Share of Gross Revenue, (Different Years 1970-1980).

	Gross Revenue	Gross Income	Gross Income Share as percent
Korea			
Seoul	30-60	18-36	60
Philippines			
Manila	5-30	0.66-1.06	12.5 - 20
Thailand			
Bangkok	2-3	0.5-1.50	25-50

Source : *Ibid.*,

The number of prostitutes appear to have increased in South East Asia. According to Ministry of Labour and Employment of the Philippines about 100,000 hospitality girls (a sophisticated name for prostitutes) had secured a licence and health certificate in Metro Manila in 1979. In 1969 tourist arrivals in Manila was 125,000 while in 1979 it went upto 950,000. Majority of them were Japanese males.

The moral of the story is clear for India. An increase in female work participation rate *per se* cannot be declared as an indication of improvement of the lot of women. In the case of increase in female work participation rate, we should not fall a prey to the relocation of the sweated industries in the Third World and India whereby, women would come to be exploited more. Thus the Third World should not become a zone of AIDS with the increase in prostitution. No wonder the medical infrastructure to deal with AIDS is coming in first because it is sure to have a market for its products in the near future. ■

BOOK REVIEW

Rabindranath Tagore's Impact on Germany

JAG MOHAN

Opening this illustrated,handsomely produced book and glancing at the pages itself was a pleasure. Perusing this bi-lingual book in English and German was a great pleasure. Brought out to mark the Gurudev's fiftieth death anniversary last year, it records the impact (both favourabe and critical) of the three visits of the Nobel Laureate to Germany in 1921,1926 and 1930.

Those were the halcyon days between the two World Wars when a high premium was placed on literature as such. Books were not considered as well as packaged commodities in the market place as they are today. Books were the vehicles that conveyed sparkling ideas or aesthetic pleasure. They also promoted international understanding and exchange of ideas and visions of individual writers.

Rabindranath Tagore and Germany: A Documentation, by Martin Kampchen (Max Mueller Bhavan/Goethe Institute, Calcutta. Distributed by Rupa & Co., 1990; pp.160, Rs.100).

Germans are famous for their scholarship and documentation. It is one of their specialities. Martin Kampchen, who has been living in India since 1979 at Santiniketan, belongs to this fine tradition. Doctorates have been bestowed on him by the Vienna and Vishwa Bharati Universities for his theses on German literature and comparative literature respectively. He has translated two volumes of Bengali poetry into German and written a biography of Gurudev, also in German. Recently, the Tagore Prize of the Indo-German Association was awarded to this *Deshi Kotama* of Santiniketan. His credentials are impeceable.

Wisely enough he had chosen Alex Aronson to write the preface to this book. Aronson's book, *Rabindranath Tagore through Western Eyes* (1943) was a pioneering study. Aronson, a scholar in German, French and English had lived for many years at Santiniketan and taught at Viswa Bharati. His preface does not say a word about Kampchen's book but he has written much of the Indo-European dialogue through books and about the atmosphere in Santiniketan.

This book with a large format, published with taste in typography, lay-out, binding and cover design, which carries a photograph of Gurudev and Albert Einstein, taken in 1930, when they had met in Berlin. This is not to be mistaken as a coffee table book. Its value lies more in the text than the few rare photographs, drawings, reproductions of cartoons and covers of Gurudev's books in German. (The back cover has a drawing of Tagore ice-skating with Henny porten, a well-known film actress.)

Kampchen, like a detective, has perused books and magazines, newspapers and the letters and he has written a candid book about the reactions of the stalwarts of German literature of that period—ranging from Thomas Mann to Franz Kafka, from Rainer Maria Rilke to Albet Schweitzer, from Hermann Hesse to Stella Kramrisch.

Germans from Goethe to Schopenhomer had built up a tradition of Indophiles in their country. But when an Indian was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature as a token of universal recognition of *Gitanjali*, quite a few among the German literati of the period were in consternation. Some welcomed and others felt jealous. Some were charmed by the "exotic" presence of Tagore and others dismissed him. While the French savant Andre Gide, spontaneously decided to translate *Gitanjali* into French, Rilke declined to do so, even after appeals from a publisher. Even the fact that W.B. Yeats, the Irish poet and Ezra Pound, the American poet and translator, were very much involved with the English translation of *Gitanjali* did not inspire Rilke.

During the inter-War period Germany, even while being a defeated nation, was rebuilding itself. Nazism was rearing its head as also Fascism in Italy. Peace and international harmony were a little too difficult to subscribe or endorse.

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MARTIN KAMPCHEN has recorded various opinions. The Jews and their friends thought Rabindranath should be a "Rabbi" from the east. The PRO of the Nazis, Josef Goebbels dismissed him as "Rabbi Nathan"? ~~Mussolini described him as~~ "the Poet of Flowers and Stars and Pounds Sterling". Even Thomas Mann, who was reluctant in meeting Gurudev, after a personal encounter wrote thus: "The impression of a fine old English lady gained strength".

But Gurudev triumphed over his critics and denigrators. Tagore's friendship with Romain Rolland, a patriarch among European intellectuals mattered very much. Count Hermann Keyserling wanted to monopolise on Tagore and capitalise on his popularity.

An Old Ghost's Grouse

It happens whenever an important dignitary dies. It happened again when Hidayatullah died. All India Radio told us that "his mortal remains" were cremated.

Some people seem to think that when the great go, ordinary words won't do. AIR employs a special vocabulary of death. The staff are probably afraid that they might be pulled up by Ministers and MPs if they were not respectful enough towards the "departed leaders".

Let us look at this business of death. Suppose a dignitary dies. Is it not a strange kind of autopsy to say that the funeral that follows is not of that dignitary but only of his body—his "mortal remains"?

PTI, which is a kind of private sector All India Radio, also used the expression "mortal remains" when reporting Hidayatullah's funeral. The UNI report did away with this artifice and told us that Hidayatullah was cremated. So did *The Times of India*. But none explained how a Muslim had come to be cremated, contrary to the practice of burial common to the people of that faith. (Had the former Chief Justice and Vice-President expressed a wish to this effect, or was it the family's decision?)

The funerary vocabulary is always a little more pompous in our mother-tongues. The Hindi bulletins of All India Radio spoke of Hidayatullah's Paartiv Sharir. "Paarthiv" means "earthly"; it is the adjectival form of "Prithvi". The question arises whether there is any "Sharir" that is not "Paarthiv".

The expression "mortal remains" is what *Modern English Usage* calls "stock pathos". The paragraph under that heading says:

> *Some words and phrases have become so associated with melancholy occasions that it seems hardly decent to let such an occasion pass unattended by any of them. It is true that such happenings and suits of woe save much trouble; it is true that to mock at them lays one open to suspicion of hard-heartedness; it is also true that the use of them suggest, if not quite insincerity, yet a factitious sort of emotion and those are well advised who abstain from them.*

H.Y.S.

Kurt Wolff, Tagore's publisher went out of the way to look after Tagore and his comforts, meeting and tour programmes. There is an interesting story of how he became Tagore's publisher in Germany. The story is that the English translation of *Gitanjali* at the proof stage was sent by the English publisher to Kurt Wolff. It was scrutinised by two of his editors who found it a bit too esoteric and mystical. So, the story goes, Wolff asked the advance copy to be returned immediately by post. When the editor concerned was returning from the post office he met another editor who informed him that the Nobel Prize had been awarded to Tagore for *Gitanjali*, the editor promptly went to the post office and managed to retrieve it.

Wolff commissioned Rilke to translate it and he refused after protracted correspondence. Finally, the German translation from the English version was done by Marie Louise Gothein and the book came out in 1914. It sold a million copies over the years. Incidentally, Kurt Wolff, who had migrated to the USA was also the publisher of the English translation of Boris Pasternak's *Dr. Zhivage*, another Nobel Prize-Winner.

Subsequently, several other books of Tagore were translated by Helene Meyer Franck and published by Wolff. Helene was such a devoted translater that after translating from English for some time she learnt Bengali and after mastering it, did the translations directly from Bengali. Tagore's books were reviewed among others by Bertolt Brecht — and the whole review is reprinted in this book.

Just before and during the second World War there was a slump in Tagore's popularity in Germany. His philosophical ideas and ideals and his plea for universal hamanism were against the grain of the collective mood of the period. Then emerged the two Germanys. Years later, there was a revival of Tagore, mere so in the erstwhile German Democratic Republic. East German Indologists and Indophiles like Walter Ruben and Heins Node popularised Gurudev.

The bibliography included in Kampchen's book is extensive and methodically arranged. Books on various aspects of Tagore (as painter, playwright and choreographer) have appeared in GDR and Federal Republic of Germany.

The English language version of the book has been translated by S.V.Raman (Programme Officer of Max Mueller, who is well-known for his proficiency in German language as also in Bengali, English and his mother tougue, Tamil) and Martin Kampchen, under the editorship of Jeanne Openshaw, now working for her doctorate at Vishwa Bharati. No wonder the book reads well. ■

CAMEO

COMIC
or
The Great Indian Perestroika

SOM BENEGAL

(The Prime Minister is standing in front of a large map of India—if India it can be called anymore. He is looking intent and thoughtful. Enter Political Adviser, who, although an alumni of Harvard, MIT, Oxford and Matsushita Universities, comes from a long line of butchers reaching back to Chengiz Khan.

P.A. (*coughing discreetly*): Ahem... You sent for me, sir?

P.M. (*turns round*): Ah, my dear fellow, just the person I wanted. We have a problem. I was admiring the way you have helped to divide our country. In fact, to carve it.

P.A. (*with suitable deference*): It comes from my histogenetic background, sir. We have been great carvers in our time. Not just wood, ivory, stone and metal but something more vital, if I may say so—meat! Goulash was invented by my great-great-great-great-great-grandfather in Magyardesh in Taras Bulba's time. Kheema by my great-great-great-great-grandfather in Timur's time when he ruled from the Oxus to the Brahmaputra not to mention the Godavari and Cauvery. Olla-podrida was invented by my great-great-great-grandfather Who served Torguemada in Spain. My great-great grandfather invented the chop, and my great grandfather....

P.M. : Yes, yes I know all this. I read it in your biodata when you applied for this post.

P.A. : Sir, I was only proving that we have always endeavoured to satisfy.

P.M. : Yes, I know, I can see the result of your work. You have outdone Sardar Patel in reverse. From 372 princely states and presidencies consolidated by him into 23 States, you have not only undone his work but added to the number. What are we now—the Commonwealth of Micro-Indian Countries (COMIC)—602 states?

P.A.(*modestly*): No, sir, at the last count we were 753 independent countries.

P.M. : Very impressive.

P.A. (*even more modestly*): All your work, sir.

P.M.(*looking rather suspicious*): Is that a compliment or a back-handed compliment? At any rate, who would have thought that the break-up of India, as we knew it, would begin, not with Khalistan or Assam, or Tamil Nadu, or even Biju Patnaik's Orissa, but the short war between Maharashtra and Karnataka over Belgaum!

P.A. : Sir, you solved it brilliantly by getting a consensus to recreate themselves.

P.A. (*with his famous smile*): or shall we say, restructure? (*They both laugh.*)

P.A. : The ghost of perestroika still loomed large! (*They both laugh again.*)

P.M. : It still does, you know! (*More laughter.*)

P.A. : Sir, I cannot but recall how States returned to provinces, to principalities to princes. The Peshwas, the Holkars, the Gaekwads, Bhonsles, the Scindias all came into their own. And, of course, on the other side the Chalukyas, Cholas, Pandians, Pallavas and Cheras. It was a domino effect, as they used to say.

P.M. : Yes, very interesting—the Rajputana and Kathiawar states broke up Rajasthan and Gujarat and Saurashtra. The list is too long to enumerate. What I liked was that Jayalalitha and Biju were happy to get their Eelam and Kalinga. Even Karunanidhi could find common cause with the Puratchi Thalaivi, the Revolutionary Leader.

P.A. (*coughing discreetly*): But I think, sir, your handling of Punjab was simply fantastic.

P.M. (*modestly*) :Well, the situation had reached absurd proportions with 78 Akali Dals.

P.A. : In a master-stroke through consensus you brought them down to 26 and gave them each their Khalistans.

P.M. : Yes, this way we could alphabetically have Khalistan (A) to Khalistan (Z).

P.A. : And, of course, they are living happily amongst themselves and the rest of us. But, sir, there was even a greater challenge that you had to face—the illegal immigrants and refugees who claimed to be part of this country.

P.M. : You know, in a sense, we are prisoners of our history, tradition and philosophy. As I assured President Mitterand long ago, in French, *nous sommes un peuple tolerant*, we are a tolerant people, no one needs to fear us. Everyone's right will be respected and upheld.

P.A. : (*coughing diplomatically*) : Sir, when you said that you, perhaps, did not know the dimensional apogee of your assurance.

P.M. : Yes, I did not realise that I was going to swallow the whole world—almost. (*Smiles his famous smile.*)

P.A. : Here again, you almost, to use your own words, carried it off.

P.M. : What choice did we have? There were these Bangladeshis, or non-Bangladeshis or Bangladeshi Indians, or Indian Bangladeshis or non-Indians, Bangladeshis or Indo-non-Bandladeshis, the situation was weird. As I told Begum Khaleda Zia in Bengali: We can take some Bangladeshis for all of the time, and all the Bangladeshis for some of the time but we cannot take all the Bangladeshis for all of the time.

P.A. : As I recall, Begum Zia denied that there were any Bangladeshis at any time!

P.M. : It was a bizarre situation, as I told Chancellor Helmut Kohl in German—*die Situation ist Bizarr*.

P.A. : Sir, you could also have said, "*der Zustand ist Wunderlich*".

P.M.: Ah, but our people back home would not have understood. So in the highest traditions of our tradition we took the Bangladeshis and gave them their Swadhin Muslim Banga Bhoomi. I must say that Laloo Prasad Yadav, overcome by some attack of Moral Rearmament, readily agreed to accommodate both Jharkhand and this Swadhin thing. So also Jyoti Basu, overcoming his discredited Marxism.

P.A. : Sir, that took care of the Bangladeshi situation which was attracting unfavourable world-wide attention from Amnesty International and other bodies, including our own vociferous liberty and human rights groups.

P.M. : I cannot, of course, forget that the ultimate carving was yours.

P.A. (*with unctuousness*): Sir, as I said, from time immemorial we, in our family, have endeavoured to satisfy.

P.M. (*sternly*): You realise, of course, that it was inevitable in the circumstances that we would have to regularise the Tibetan presence in India which had been there for half a century.

P.A.: So you graciously let them have the independent state of Little Tibet. It was quite amazing that you got consensus from Xiao Ping-pong, Hsu Sing-song, and Qui Qing-qong, the great Chinese helmsmen, to agree to this.

P.M.(*drily*): Frankly they had no other choice, as I told them in the Shensi dialect. With Taiwan gone and pro-democracy uprisings in Anhwei, Kiangsu, Honan, Hunan, Szechwan, Hupeh, Hopeh and so on, they could not resist our giving our Tibetans their Little Tibet.

P.A. : Naturally another domino effect followed.

P.M. : Quite naturally. You had to carve out states for all the other refugees and immigrants—the Palestinians who badly needed a homeland, the Afghans, Iranians (who recalled the Greek influence on our culture and sculpture from the time of Alexander), even the Bosnians (who Iqbal Masud told us have everything in common with us.) Were there not some from Africa, north of the Sahara, and Africa, south of the Sahara?

P.A. : Yes, and some from South America, north and south of the Mato Grasso. There was once a Hindu America, sir, as some of our scholars have proved. The original people of South America cherished their relations with us from the dawn of time. You took them in also, the Incas, Mayas, Aztecs, Naczas...

P.M.: (*cutting in*): We had no choice, as I told the Presidents of the Latin American countries in Spanish and Portuguese depending on the case—*no tenemos alternative*.

P.A. :(*highly ecstatic*): Sir, what a unity in diversity we have created!

P.M. :(*drily*): And also a diversity in disunity! Remember the Era of the Dissidents?

P.A. : (*admiringly*): But by your maxims, "Not to act is to act", "Speech expresses as folly, silence impresses as wisdom", and "Confusion can be led to fusion", and furthermore, "Consensus brings people to their senses", you brought everyone to unity.

P.M. :(*deprecatingly*): Let us end this mutual back-slapping. I called you for one of our most difficult challenges.

P.A. :(*cloyingly*): Sir, no challenge is too difficult for you. As Ali Siddiqui said, you are the "Saviour of India".

P.M. (*severely*) : Stop it! I don't want to hear that. You know last month the first extra-terrestrials landed on the Earth.

P.A.: Yes, sir, the commotion died down after a week.

P.M.: The commotion may have died down but their emotion is very much alive and they are a dissatisfied lot. They want lebensraum or living space, as Bangladeshi intellectuals once used to argue. Having rejected all offers they want to settle down in our COMIC. I got this in a secret report from our Ambassador at the UN.

P.A. : Actually, sir, if I may say so without sounding impertinent, it has already been broadcast by all the satellite networks and news agencies.

P.M.(*wearily*): Nothing remains a secret anymore, does it? A secret used to be leaked within hours even in the old non-satellite days. But now you cannot whisper without its being slammed around the world in minutes.

P.A..(*in a matter-of-fact tone*): Within seconds, sir, actually micro-seconds.

P.M.: So, can you give me a brief on this problem. As you know, I have been travelling abroad for the past three weeks and have been rather out of touch.

P.A. (*putting his fingers together and holding them beneath his chin*): Actually, sir, these extra-terrestrials have come from one of the two planets of the nearest star from our Solar system – the Proxima Centauri. This planet is called Xerocqx. It has a tyrannocracy. Though very advanced technologically, enough to make the journey to the earth, they are ruled by Tyrants. Like the Pilgrim Fathers who escaped from Europe to America, this group has escaped from Xerocqx to come to the Earth. But having come here – and the journey took them four years travelling at just under the speed of light – they are disappointed to find tyranny everywhere.

P.M. : But surely we have many democracies on the Earth?

P.A. : They do not see it that way. Their leader observes that man is born free but everywhere he is in chains except in the COMIC. Why should they exchange one tyranny for another after such a long flight?

P.M. : So?

P.A. : They feel the COMIC is the only place where all are free to do anything they please. So they want to come here.

P.M. : But, my dear fellow, do we have any room left?

P.A. : Sir, if I may state humbly, isn't that why you sent for me?

P.M. : Of course, of course, don't tell me you have already found a place to carve for them!

P.A. : All through history our family has endeavoured to satisfy!

P.M. : Yes, yes, now don't go into that history. What is the solution?

P.A. : (*in a pedagogic tone*): Sir, the Xerocqxians, are amphibious, ahem, entities. Basically they live underwater where they have built remarkable architecturally designed megalopolises. But being amphibious they need to surface from time to time. By a strange coincidence their atmosphere is like ours and...

P.M. : (*somewhat impatiently*): My dear fellow, can you come to the point? What do you suggest? The Bay of Bengal?

P.A. : (*imperturbably*): No, sir, the littoral states around it would never agree. There is a better solution...

P.M. : The suspense is killing. What is it, what is it?

P.A. : (*like Gogia Pasha pulling out a surprise*): Sir, if you will see in the map before you, in the Ten Degree Channel between the Andaman and Nicobar Islands is a large body of sea and in it a trench of deep water, perfect for the Xerocqxians to build their cities. Being just above the Equator it is warm water. For the same reason, above water there is a largely uninhabited island called Teressa, lush, tropical, verdant, sylvan, organometallically rich...

P.M. : Please, less poetry and oratory...

P.A. : Sir, it would be perfect, a *paradiso* for them.

P.M. : What about the people around, the Andamanese and the Nicobareans. You expect no opposition from them?

P.A. : No sir, such opposition as there might be can be settled by consensus. But from my own information gathered in the past fortnight, they would actually be happy to accommodate the Xerocqxians, seeing the tourist possibilities, and the worldwide publicity their area would get. It only needs your presence to assure them.

P.M. (*looking very thoughtful in his famous way*): I see you have done a good job in anticipation, as usual, but one thing bothers me. What language do the Xerocqxians speak?

P.A. (*smugly*): Sir, it consists of clicks, beeps and whistles in a binary system, much like our computers but, of course, highly advanced. But they have reduced it to meet our lower comprehension.

P.M. :How do I greet them to our shores, actually our deeps? In what language? Surely not in clicks, beeps and whistles?

P.A. (*with a straight face*): Sir, why not, with so many languages and sounds at your command, including *guna, vriddhi, swarabhakti* phonetics, you should have no trouble with the Xerocqxian language.

P.M. (*dubiously*): I am not so sure.

P.A.: Sir, if I may say so, I took the liberty of asking our foremost computer and linguistic scientists to work out a comprehensive programme for you to have a crash programme on this language. They are ready.

P.M.: Is there anything you do not think of?

P.A. (*with a steady look going back to two thousand years*): Sir, we endeavour... ■

ARVIND N. DAS : BANKRUPT ECONOMICS

(Continued from page 2)

the first place, it is necessary to identify who lost, not just who benefited, from the scam. First, the losers are the innocent depositors in the now liquidated Bank of Karad and similarly-placed financial institutions. Second, there are those native investors who were lured by the spiralling share prices and lost when the market crashed. Third are the industries whose money was put into dubious transactions. Fourth are the banks which were defrauded through fake banker's receipts. And finally, the tax-paying price lost when government owned banks and public-sector undertakings were defrauded.

It is also necessary to understand the systemic reason why such a scam, which Manmohan Singh calls "a systems failure", took place at all. The easy answer is the cupidity and greed of some Indians and foreigners, but that is not enough. It is important is realise that the scam became possible when economics was so altered that manufacturing was discounted and premium was put on merely manipulating money. As significance shifted from productive to speculative uses of capital, as agriculture and industry, producing and even marketing, were subordinated to finance capital, profits could be made by merely entering book transactions and moving money around. Usury staged a respectable comeback and Air India and OIDB, PFC and National Housing Bank all rushed forth to multiply money through interest. The scam players were mere middlemen who were conveniently present to brush illegalities under the carpet. When prudence is sacrificed along with productivity, the economy stagnates and the scum floats to the top.

As an old-time student of political economy, Manmohan Singh should have known this. The distortions in the economy brought about when finance capital dominates over manufacturing capital are not new discoveries. Hilferding and Lenin, Schumpeter and Galbraith, and even Keynes who is being resurrected in post-Thatcherite Britain and Clinton's employment-oriented America—all these and many other political economists have written on these. Educated Indians in charge of shaping the economy ignored their lessons and ordinary Indians now pay for that negligence.

What now? Has the lesson of the scam been learnt? It would appear not, if one looks at the most recent "success story" of the double-entry economics currently in vogue; the disinvestment of public sector shares. It appears that the shares have largely been transferred to the public sector Unit Trust of India since actual private investors were debarred from the proceedings by the fixation of an enormously steep floor bid. Thus, even "privatisation" has been given a new meaning by those who set the tone of the political discourse. It does not mean that more funds have become available to public sector concerns. At the same time, the public sector financial institutions like UTI will have less funds to be invested in to private sector.

Clever budgetary accountancy does not help where the crunch lies in the balance of payments. More loans only mean more debts and higher debt servicing. Globalisation also means that global recession will limit foreign investment in India and curtail exports. Meanwhile, import liberalisation continues apace and the trade gap widens.

The ghosts that lurk behind the scam are nurtured by faith in the mythology of globalisation without encouraging production and modernising the infrastructure. They can only be exorcised by the reassertion of real-time political economy. The shrill notes of the big-time scammers squealing against each other are distracting from the task of actual economic modernisation. They must be stilled soon. ■

(Courtesy : *The Times of India*)

NASIM : RECASTING AFGHAN POLICY

(Continued from page 6)

resolve to weaken Hekmatyar's forces. Hekmatyar's Hizb claims that Dostum forces together with Jamiat-i-Islami's *Shoora-i-Nazar mujahideen* attacked Hizb bases in the northern Baghlan province.

Another indication of absence of a patch-up between Hekmatyar and Kabul is that in the latest shuffle in the armed forces no one from Hizb has been inducted.

Differences among Afghans over the holding of the traditional *Loi Jigra* or elections remains unresolved. A third option that is emerging is the selection of a *Hal-o-Aqd* or Council of Wise Men that will be convened instead of the *Loi Jigra*. This *Shoora* will comprise of members from major *mujahideen* groups and from different provinces. It would elect the interim government before October 24.

Even Hekmatyar who was earlier only supporting elections has agreed to this *Shoora*. The interim government elected by the Shoora will remain in office for eighteen months. Its mandate will be framing of a constitution and making preparations for holding of elections.

Islamabad's efforts have yielded a unity of objective and policy on Afghanistan among external forces. To a large extent suspicion and harmful competitiveness appears to have been replaced with enlightened cooperation among Iran and Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. This will have a positive impact on the divisive forces inside Afghanistan.

While many of the major groups and splinter forces within Afghanistan tied to external benefactors may not have become autonomous—Hekmatyar being a case in point—there are still many who recognise that without external humanitarian support by neighbouring countries Afghanistan cannot ensure its own rec-onstruction.

Also, to rebuild a politically fragmented Afghanistan cooperation from outside, especially from neighbouring countries, is important. These countries, will largely have to ensure that the Afghan groups they had previously tutored in lessons of unbridled political ambitions unlearn these lessons.

Now lessons of mutual accommodation have to be taught. Islamabad is doing just that: after following an Afghan policy whose partial objective was to supposedly serve Pakistan's interests while undermining the Afghan national interest. Recent developments on the Afghan front have proved the absurdity of acquiring strategic depth by installing its own man in Kabul and has revealed the extent of damage inflicted upon the Afghan political scene.

Islamabad's latest moves on Afghanistan appear to be aimed at 'undoing' much of the political damage Pakistan's military leadership of the eighties had inflicted on the Afghan scene. Islamabad's efforts to resolve the Afghan political crisis are on the right track. Much of the statements issued by politicians on Afghanistan naively calling for non-interference by Islamabad are therefore unthinking statements. ■

Regrets

The Serial number of *Mainstream,* dated October 17, 1992 wrongly reads as Vol XXX NO 51; instead it should read as Vol XXX NO 52.The error is regretted.

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POLITICAL NOTEBOOK

Chickens coming home to Roost

Significant events signalling landmark developments do not sometimes get the treatment they deserve from the media. One of these occurred on October 23 when the Congress President held a meeting with the presidents of the Pradesh Congress Committees.

The meeting was scheduled to review political developments as well as the party's organisational matters since the Tirupati session of the Congress held six months ago. As per the official briefing, the resolution passed at the end of the day's labours was along expected lines—laurels for Narasimha Rao for holding inner-party elections, for having lowered communal and caste ensions, for the Punjab elections, for his consensus style functioning and also or the economic reforms. By themselves all these are important points as they provide for the Congress President a demonstration of support for his leadership, particularly as he has been voking criticism for protracted indecision on many issues.

However, this is not the entire story bout that meeting. What is undoubedly more significant about it is the harp criticisms over the economic olicies, voiced by a number of prominent leaders present. It was obous that the party leadership was not prepared for such a volume of criticism n this score, as was clear from the fact that the Finance Minister was not iginally scheduled to be present at the eeting. But the Congress President nsing the magnitude of the discontent as voiced by a number of senior leaders, offered to call Dr. Manmohan Singh to listen to the criticism and to offer his explanation about them. So, the Finance Minister was sent for and attended the afternoon session during which he had to face quite a formidable barrage of criticisms. At the end, some of the stalwarts present could not help carrying home the impression that the economic reforms package as implemented is undermining the support base of the Congress party.

Quite unexpectedly, the Kerala Congress President Vayalar Ravi, placed a report which strongly criticised various facets of the new economic reforms. He was categoric that this new economic policy package was antagonising the traditional supporters of the Congress who had stood by it since the days of the freedom struggle. He specifically mentioned that the working class, the peasantry and the middle class were being badly hit by the present economic policies. During the discussion that followed, specific mention was made about the cut in fertiliser subsidy, and closure of some of the public-sector units, the unchecked price rise, the plight of the small scale industry and the inadequacy of the public distribution system.

The critics made it clear that they were not opposed to liberalisation and the removal of controls, but the policy as is being pursued could bring no improvement to the majority of the population. It was pointed out that the government's claim about improvement

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of the balance of payments position is based on heavy external borrowings and not on export earnings which is still dismally low, contrary to what was promised last year. Vayalar Ravi's note made a pointed reference to the rise in imports which were being wasted for importing luxury goods pandering to the rich minority. He warned that this would land the country "in an unbailable debt trap". The main thrust of the criticisms voiced at the meeting was that the economic reforms as pursued by the government would seriously undermine the political base of the Congress party.

Subsequently, on October 26, Vayalar Ravi told the press at Kozhikode about his differences with Manmohan Singh as he felt that the economic reforms should emphasise maximum utilisation of the existing infrastructure and manpower available in the country. He made it clear that the new economic policy package has created rift within the Congress party.

It is significant that on that very day, the former Commerce Minister P. Chidamabaram, speaking at a seminar, pressed for additional allocation of at least Rs one thousand crore for poverty alleviation programmes through a supplementary Budget, adding: "I am not happy with the allocations made for poverty alleviation programmes in the Budget for 1990-91 and 1991-92", and he also made it clear that in real terms, the allocation on this count for 1992-93 was less than that of the previous year. From his speech, it also came out that the much-publicised National Renewal Fund which is supposed to provide alternative openings for those to be hit by the Exit policy has not yet received Rs one thousand crore which the Finance Minister had promised in his Budget. One more assault on the political standing of the Congress party.

In this context, there has generated considerable interest in the British Prime Minister John Major's crisis on proposing the closure of a large number of coal-mines. The fact that he had to beat an ignominious retreat over his exit policy is not irrelevant for our Prime Minister, no matter what his Finance Minister might propose.

There are already visible, some items of difference between the two. The Prime Minister himself has acknowledged to pressmen on return from his Kathmand visit that difference existed between him and h Finance Minister about the role and impact of th securities scandal. Narasimha Rao has been categor in stating that the scam had damaged the econom position of the country particularly the crucial bankir sector, while Dr Manmohan Singh has throughout bee underplaying the effect on the scam; in fact in the ve first round he had claimed that the abnormal over-hea ing of the stock exchange was one of the symptoms the success of his economic reforms.

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The Finance Minister has been at pains in defendi the indefensible, namely the negligence and miscoudu of the Reserve Bank as revealed by the scam. On t contrary, the Joint Parliamentary Committee engag in studying the scam, has already given sufficient indic tion of the serious lapse of the bank executives whi the RBI should have checked. This would come c more glaringly when the JPC examines the RBI offici early in November. Besides, Dr Manmohan Singl gratuitous defence of the two Ministers of State unc him who are facing the charge of violation of parliame tary privilege, has not exactly earned him encomiu from this parliamentary body itself.

It is now getting clear that that sudden claim by t Finance Ministry of having contained the rate of inf tion was misleading; in fact, the inflation rate has ag been picking up,belying the predictions of the Finar Minister. And cap it all, the actual investments fr abroad have so far been appallingly disappointing f sifying the Finance Minister's forecast.

With his attention glued to almost round-the cl Fund-Bank guidance, it is understandable why he is n going to import, as reported, a whole host of so-cal experts from that outfit—including a number of foreign for the purpose—to advise him how to proceed with economic reforms programme. Implied in this is his derstanding that those distinguished specialists in country who have devoted themselves to the study of country's economy do not command the Finar Minister's confidence. This is certainly not going to dear him to the Indian public, and to that measure, Congress circles would be further embarrassed development which the Prime Minister can hardly br aside. An economic policy package which enjoins c tinuous borrowing from abroad—as M mohanomics openly demands—can hardly be acce able to the nationalist opinion in the country, as Dr Patel has recently emphasised in his lecture on the n for freedom from foreign debt.

By the time the Parliament meets for its wi session next month, the deleterious political fall-ou the over-publicised economic reforms progran would become the central concern for the nation fearsome dilemma for the Prime Minister of ha relied on a Finance Minister so appallingly innocer the political consequences of the policies he has b trying to push through at the behest of the wor super-moneylender, the Fund-Bank outfit.

October 27

Be Indian, Be Damned

V.N. NARAYANAN

Ravi Vats is an Indian citizen; he gets bashed up by a police officer. For being at a spot where the police does not like him to be. Ravi Vats is also a serving Army officer. The Army establishment is outraged. Senior police officers offer apologies to senior Army officers.

Talwar is an Indian citizen with a camera. He clicks it where a police officer thinks he should not. The camera is seized and the film taken out. Talwar is also a senior news photographer of a national daily. The press is outraged. Apologies from a police officer to the photographer.

An Indian citizen again, a doctor at a famous medical institution, incurs the wrath of a police officer for not bestowing the professional attention the latter's authority demanded. The doctor gets roughed up and is delivered a verbal lashing too. The doctors go on strike. Parleys all round; apologies and...well...“let bygones be bygones”, “forgive and forget”...*et al.*

I am not surprised about the police end of the above incidents. Over the past few decades our policemen have rendered meaningless the term “law and order”. Excesses are a routine and they have to invent news and newer atrocities to suit the definition.

Just think what would have happened if the above three victims were plain Indian citizens without professional prefixes and appendages. Were Ravi Vats not a Colonel, the Army wouldn't bother if he were to be pulverised and detained; were Talwar not a press photographer, the press would have treated film-snatching as, at best, a news-in-brief on an inside page; a private doctor bashed up wouldn't make the PGI's medicos go on strike.

A soldier in distress becomes the Army's concern; a newsman offended is the press offended and a doctor attacked is the profession attacked. But an Indian citizen in distress is nobody's concern. If the watermen of Chandigarh had only seen themselves as Indian citizens, they would never have subjected their neighbours to such misery as they inflicted, by their five-day strike and sabotage.

Laloo Prasad Yadav inimitably brought home the irrelevance of the common citizen vis-a-vis Indian society by seeking to approach the telephone people as a “common man” wanting to convey something urgent and important. The phone was slammed on him. The media emphasised the same point in their coverage of the cable car episode where the exploits of armymen and air force personnel got extensive coverage while the individual who devised his own ways to reach the stricken tourists with food and blankets got but a passing mention.

When W.S. Gilbert, in Victorian England, accosted a pompous gentleman on the road and asked him: “Excuse me, sir, are you someone in particular?” he was trying to puncture the ego of snobs in society. In today's India, the policeman would ask the same question to the law-breaker on the road, so that he can keep his options open on bashing him up if safe to do so, or to salute him in recognition of his VIPdom.

This contribution is from the Editor-in-Chief of The Tribune, *the well-known daily from Chandigarh, in which it first appeared.*

●

THE malady is contrywide and deeprooted. As an individual, you have rights but to exercise them you must be a member of an interest group. The group not only protects your rights but also seeks to protect you from the law. Thus when an advocate is arrested for stealing, the entire lawyer community rises to save him and hound out the police personnel who dared do it. When a newspaper is proceeded against for violation of building laws, it shouts: “no, press freedom is in danger”.

The group identity submerges individual delinquencies. Take the case of the journalist found guilty of slandering Jagmohan; the reaction of an overwhelming segment of the Indian press was one of shock—not at their own tribesman who had been proved to have published patent falsehoods but at the judgement sentencing the character-assassin to four months' imprisonment. The journalist community has expressed itself extensively against the judgement not with arguments and facts but with judgements of their own. The press loves to hate Jagmohan, without feeling the need for solid reasons to harbour the hate. Jagmohan has confronted the press with facts; the journalists have responded with innuendoes. Suddenly, as it were, the united stand of the press against Rajiv Gandhi's anti-defamation bill seems hollow and devoid of credibility. Journalists would not like to face the consequences of their writings. Instead they say: “We may defame you, but law should not be used against us...at any rate put kid-gloves on it”.

Sectarian appeal superseding national identity; nay superseding basic human instincts. Take Punjab. Akali leaders like Simranjit Singh Mann, Parkash Singh Badal and Gurcharan Singh Tohra were over-keen to organise a *bhog* for Sukha and Jinda. I strained and stretched my memory to recall one bhog function organised by these leaders for the countless innocent Sikhs killed by the militants and the police in Punjab. A count that I have kept (subject to acceptable statistical margin of error but based on official and police figures) shows that between 1981 and 1991 as many as 10,148 civilian citizens of Punjab lost their lives in militant killings and out of these 6,177 were Sikhs. That works out to 60.8 per cent, or 61 out of every 100 persons that a decade of militancy claimed were Sikhs.

Statistics abhor me. The death of even one individual human being takes some vital part of myself away from me. I endorse Subramania Bharati's view that a system which allows even one man to die of hunger (or of violence) should be destroyed. The state has an obligation to see that no one kills anyone... What does one say about a state which not only cannot prevent killings but also kills.

But let us come back to the Akali leaders. They have reservoirs of tears to shed for every militant killed but

(Continued on page 35)

Promoting Free Media in Central Asia

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) sponsored a seminar on Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic Asian Media in Alma Ata, the capital of Kazakhstan (October 5-9, 1992). The focus of the seminar being the promotion of free media in Central Asia, a highly valuable background paper that substantially contributed to the deliberations was the report of Martin Hadlow, the UNESCO's Regional Communication Adviser for Asia, following a mission he undertook to all the five Central Asian states of Kazakhstan, Kyrghyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan for getting a picture, from primary sources, of the state of the media in all the five countries. The report pointed to the (a) absence of any established media links between the Central Asian states; (b) paucity of international news and information with not one news agency, newspaper or radio/TV organisation in the region subscribing to any major international wire service (most of the world news coming through cooperation with ITAR-TASS in Moscow); (c) historically sustained Eurocentric, rather than Pan- Asian, outlook in Central Asia with the existence of few links with South or South-East Asia.

The report identified several problems relating to availability/cost of newsprint; lack of computer facilities; outmoded broadcasting technology; inadequate training opportunities; few modern management techniques; poor inter-regional cooperation; limited knowledge of foreign languages; scarcity of international news and information; lack of understanding of the role and responsibilities of independent media. The report also listed four immediate project areas for support from donor agencies: (i) development of news agencies and establishment of a Central Asian news exchange; (ii) international exchanges of media personnel from Central Asia with other countries of Asia; (iii) provision of computerised equipment to in-country centres for journalist training and editorial/production use by small independent newspapers; (iv) modern cameras/editing equipment and staff training for television stations to upgrdde the gathering and dissemination of news.

The final Alma Ata Declaration highlighted project proposals — identified as the specific needs of the Central Asian media but having regionwide application as well — relating to legislation, training, free flow of information, protection to journalists, public service broadcasting, professional associations and special economic issues.

Some of the participants spoke to Sumit Chakravartty (who attended the seminar as an observer) and gave their opinions on the seminar and other issues. The following excerpts of interviews with them provide an idea of their attitudes, approaches and thought processes.

— Editor

Thomas Lawrence Early
Head of Media Section,
Directorate of Human Rights, Council of Europe

Q: Please say something about your organisation.

A: The Council of Europe is an intergovernmental organisation based in Strasbourg. It brings together at present 27 European democracies, countries committed to respecting rule of law, democratic principles, fundamental human rights and freedoms.

The Council of Europe is extremely interested in the developments which have occurred in Central and East European countries since 1989 and three of the former countries of the Communist bloc have joined the Council of Europe as full members — namely Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland.

Media laws and policy constitute an essential component of our activities. The Council of Europe is committed to ensuring freedom of expression, freedom of information across frontiers. We have done a lot of activities in the field of media laws and policy within the West European context and also within the context of the newly emerging democracies in the Central and East European countries.

We are in the five Central Asian republics of the former Soviet Union for a number of reasons. Although there is a tendency for them to look towards the wider Asian framework as the ultimate destiny there are still links with Europe. In fact some people still talk of Eurasia while talking of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kryghyzstan. In June of this year the Secretary-General of Council of Europe toured the five Central Asian republics and met with officials in these countries and they expressed interest in taking advantage of our cooperation and assistance programmes for the Central and East European countries.

Q: Now that these countries have thrown off the yoke of state tyranny don't you think that they are entering a very uncertain period of getting accustomed to what is known as the tyranny of the market? In that context here in Central Asia, something which is different from Central Europe, there is a possibility of national chauvinism coming to the fore. How do you view this danger?

A: This is a problem not peculiar to the Central Asian republics, it's a problem shared by all the newly emerging democracies. They suddenly find themselves in a new situation wherein they can control their own destiny but the problem is how they master their destiny in accordance with the democratic and market principles.

You spoke of national chauvinism that could be quite pernicious if it means turning one group against other group, if it means ethnic groups seeking revenge over other groups for the sins of the past. So it is very essential to work out mechanisms to prevent national chauvinism from asserting itself at the expense of minority groups within the particular emerging democracies.

Q: I asked that in a different context. In Central Europe also you may be facing the same problem. After all it is the process of European integration which will be able to overcome that problem. But here in Central Asia they are at a lower level of both economic development as well as consciousness. The danger on this score therefore becomes more acute here. How would you react to that?

A: I think it's true what you are saying. It's a question of trying to come to grips with the new realities which have presented themselves.

Q: Don't you think that this problem has come up in the course of this seminar?

A: Yes, I think it has. And that's why it's essential for them to take advantage of the existing structures which may be able to help them. For example, the various Asian networks from the viewpoint of media that were mentioned. These could help them to adjust and grow within the new framework....

Q: There is an apprehension in the West that these Central Asian republics would veer towards some kind of Islamic fundamentalism. Do you share that apprehension on the basis of your experience here?

A: I don't think this has emerged to any great extent in the course of the discussions at the seminar. We have left the seminar with the impression that there is a risk of fundamentalism arising in these particular countries. That is why it is necessary for these Central Asian republics to be locked into a wider pluralistic framework, for example, the wider Asian framework which brings together Confucianism, Buddhism and Catholicism, and the Shinto and Islamic approaches.

Q: In the field of broadcasting you had raised at the seminar a very important point with regard to public interest broadcasts distinct from state controlled broadcasts. When there is so much talk of wholesale privatisation in these countries, what is the potentiality of public interest broadcasts here?

A: The potentiality of public interest or public service broadcasts is tremendous. I think if there is a mad rush towards deregulation, leaving everything to the market forces that could prove ruinous. I think it would be completely wrong for policy-makers at this stage in the economic development of these countries to hand in everything to the market forces. First of all, there is not sufficient advertising market available in these countries to sustain commercial operators. It's necessary to try and start from the basic principle that a public broadcasting organisation should be set up which is independent from state control, which is adequately funded...

Q: Funded by whom?

A: Funded by licence fee, for example : a licence paid by the viewers; or funded by Parliament; the government could propose a budget which would be voted by a democratically elected Parliament.

Q: That is possible in European countries. But here the economic situation being what it is do you think it is practicable?

A: I think it is practicable to find money which could be voted by Parliament to create a public interest broadcasting company which is independent from government control.

As time goes on, once the market develops, once there are the advertising and commercial sectors, once there is money around to sustain private operators you can introduce a mixed system — you can allow the public service braodcaster to cohabit with the commercial organisations. But my point is that at the present time the market is not strong enough to sustain commercial operations.

Q: What is the American response to public service broadcasting?

A: It is not that positive. Public service broadcasting started in the European countries. But in America, which has a different background, they lay a great deal of emphasis on market forces, commercial logic, business profit, broadcasting as an entrepreneurial activity. In the European countries the initial premise was to support the public broadcaster and then as time went on to open up the frequencies to the commercial channels. And this is now a feature of all European countries with the exception of Austria.

I think the Council of Europe should say that in this sort of situation when the new emerging democracies are finding their feet from the point of view of broadcasting policy you should consider very carefully in the early years a commitment to the public service principles rather than the purely commercial principle which entails obvious risks.

For example, if all the frequencies are given to commercial broadcasting, there is a risk that foreign investment might move in, people in other countries who have the money to operate will come in — the Americans, the Germans and so on.

Q: Which could lead to indirect external intervention?

A: Well, it carries with it problems in the sense that your broadcasting culture — a vital form of national culture which broadcasting is — becomes dominated by foreign press groups and foreign broadcasting groups. That is why if you have the public interest broadcasting set up by Parliament then you can maintain cultural control over your own country.

There are a whole series of different issues which are to be considered. I mentioned some of them yesterday all pertaining to the various components of broadcasting and press law systems could be brought to bear on policy makers of this region. Of course the aim should not be a paternalistic one: trying to impose upon them a package. It should be exposing them to a whole range of organising a broadcasting system or a press system in respect of fundamental human rights and freedoms, in particular freedom of the press and freedom of expression, and each country has its own traditions, works in its own environment, it is for each country to adapt or take on board these options in accordance with its own system. You cannot transpose the British system into the Central Asian republics nor can you transpose the American system here.

●

Lady Diana Dougan
Chairman, International Communication Studies, Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Washington

Q: Can you give your impressions of this seminar? How do you compare this with the previous one in Tashkent you were referring to sometime back?

A: As I mentioned in my speech at this seminar here there is a delightfully stark contrast with the meeting in Tashkent nine years ago where the focus was not only on the new world information order but there was also the rhetoric of press freedom. But in this case although the understanding is not terribly deep, I think there is a much deeper understanding of diverse and pluralistic communication.

Q: As a leading exponent of the American policy on communication how do you view the American policy towards Central Asia? The way things have developed do you think the evolution of Central Asia towards a more pluralistic society is by and large in line with whatever you had in view as an objective?

A: Obviously I welcome the pluralism as long as it doesn't end up disadvantaging certain cultural minorities and so on. I would say in general my personal view — not a governmental view — is that there has been too much focus on Moscow and Russia and not enough on some of these other republics. And Russia itself is so vast and so large and so politically complex that in some respects no amount of outside influence is going to have much effect on Russia. The political and economic reform and change they will have to undertake themselves. In some of these smaller republics who have had no ability or history to be in charge of their own destiny the relationship with them is every bit as important. It may not appear strategically as important but...

Q: But strategically also Kazakhstan occupies a very important place.

A: Of course. But I would not dismiss the smaller republics either. I think that if there can be an economic and democratic success in one of the smaller republics it would have a very radiated effect elsewhere.

And in Kazakhstan — although it is not that small and in terms of natural resources it is only surpassed by Russia itself — there is a lot of potential here.

But you can't expect those who have spent their whole lives under one system to suddenly learn a new language and a new way of thinking.

I think the biggest problem is not so much going back to communism, reverting to communism, but to an oppressive nationalism in these republics. There are battles within these countries. Here you have the battle between the Kazakh and the Russian languages, at what point you are going to be suppressed...

Two points that I found missing in this conference: there is still very little understanding or appreciation of private media as opposed to "independent government-funded media"; and even though there was a lot of discussion about private media, and I myself mentioned the importance of becoming economically self-sufficient, in the final declaration and resolutions there was no reference to private media.

Q: Do you think that these were a negative feature of the seminar?

A: Well, I think this was the result of a compromise.

Q: What do you think would be the long-term perspective now?

A: I think things would get worse before they get better.

Q: So you do not rule out the emergence of that kind of nationalism here which you were mentioning sometime back?

A: It's already in existence in Tajikistan — it's already happening there.

Q: How should the pluralistic societies of the West and the East try to combat this?

A: Well, among other things focussing on trying to develop a middle class. There is an evolving class of rich former Communists who were always rich and privileged under communism, and the transition to a market economy is not well organised and as far as the trading process is concerned I doubt if it ever will be. But I would hope that one of the biggest areas of focus is on activities that would help to create a market economy of middle class not just a few rich former bureaucrats.

Q: But how do you react to the way in which they were really begging for aid?

A: That's why I want to emphasise on self-sufficiency rather than assistance. There's no money up for Marshal Plans any more.

Q: After this seminar would the United States be thinking of returning to the UNESCO formally?

A: No, at this point of time I think although we still support their changes in terms of reforms — I think they have taken certain very positive steps — but at this point of time I am not close enough to the issues and situations to make any specific comments; besides I am speaking as an individual.

Q: One last question. Did you get any kind of feeling of Russian-Kazakh tensions here? What do you think of the potentiality of that kind of conflict taking shape in the coming few months?

A: I think it exists. But it is very difficult to say by how much it exists because there is always a tendency to exaggerate at times one, to draw attention to something so that it will not happen and the other, to exaggerate because they want to happen. It's a problem. Language in any country can be a problem. But I can't really say much on this.

Q: Now that the United States has come in a big way here, especially with the conclusion of the Chevron deal on oil exploration in Kazakhstan, do you think the conditions here would stabilise?

A: Well, Chevron is a company and not the United States. It only touches on one aspect and...

Q: Economic aspect.

A: A limited one at that even though it seems quite large and has been quite publicised. I would now go back to my earlier point that there needs to be an understanding and laws and regulations passed that would support middle class privatisation and middle class development in a model economy.

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Anuar Alimzanov

President, Independent TV Company TAN, Alma Ata

Q: As far as I know you are the President of the Socialist Party. After the way things have changed here do you think it necessary to retain the name 'socialist'?

A: 'Socialism' comes from the idea of social justice. Social justice is the ever-present aspiration in all the Holy Books — Quran, Bible, etc. It (the word 'socialism') has a new meaning now.

Q: In your concluding speech you spoke about financial dependence on Russia. They are providing five billion roubles and taking away seven billion roubles. Is it connected with the rate of interest on aid from Russia?

A: We take credits from Russia and then when we return the amount we have to pay interest and that demands an additional amount. We cannot change this situation because economically we are too much connected with Russia. We must gradually reach independence. But so far economically we are so connected...

Q: You mentioned in your speech that you should not pay attention only to the West but also to the East, to Asia. In that case since our conditions are similar I think there is need for you to have more interaction with countries of Asia.

A: All the journalists go to the West and come and sing praises. But there is little interaction with countries of Asia. Can you imagine there is no Kazakh correspondent in such countries as India, China?

Q: You said that you want to have interaction with countries like India, China etc. But do you want to have direct interaction and not through Russia?

A: Yes, direct. We used to reach the nose in the round about way in the past. Now we are trying to reach it in the normal, direct way.

Q: Do you think the whole idea of free flow of information should also be a kind of balanced flow of information as was mentioned in the Mcbride Report which is now being totally rejected by the UNESCO. The idea of a new international information order — what do you have to say about that? Have you also rejected it?

A: The idea is good. But we have to gradually swallow it. It comes at a time when we cannot digest it immediately. Gradually we will come to the new international information order. Economically we are so much dependent...

Q: On whom?

A: We are so dependent on anybody and everybody — we don't have our own currency, there are so many economic problems. That's what I mean by dependence. ■

Does India have a Role in New World Order?

J.D. SETHI

Does India have a role in the new world order, whatever that order means? Not for another ten years. During this period her highest priority should be to protect herself against the threats from abroad and internal political disorder, sabotage of development, and economic crimes and crisis. Indeed India has to go back to the original Nehruvian position of 1946 of its limited external role from which he was pushed to a road to disaster of globalisation, first by Krishna Menon and then both by the Soviet lobbyists and American liberals. Overreaching in foreign policy increases the chances of war.

The debate about the world order is not being ordained by any new philosophic view, though there is a lot of questioning about the self-proclaimed rationality of the main actors which a former British diplomat, Philip Albot, has called "a form of madness". The full extent of the madness is not yet revealed but there is enough to go around spilling blood. The crux of the order is in the minds and the structure of ideas of those who will make the order for tomorrow.

The old world order, as Bruce Cummings has argued, consisted of two projects, the containment project and the hegemonic project. The American hegemony had already been eroded during the last phase of the Cold War. The Americans could not keep the Germans and the Japanese in check. Europeans will slowly edge out the US from Europe. Therefore, let us not accept the American claims of their hegemonic world and its other popular version – the unipolar world.

According to a section of the American establishment, the Gulf war and the collapse of the Soviet Union have marked the new beginning of *Pax Americana* in which the world will have to acquiesce in. Some of the LDCs, including India, accepted this view as gospel truth. The statement is a half lie because there are equally powerful actors and factors which will undermine this hegemony.

How amazing our analytical simplification is in defining and characterising the new world order! Experts are hammering into our ears that it is a unipolar world and the rest follows. After the US, war with Iraq and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the experts feel nothing else can override that reality. However, some Americans think quite the contrary to the *Pax Americana* idea. They are conscious of their military power and the need to use it in defence of the US interests. But they are equally aware of such limitations as the growing power of other actors, the assertion of international opinion, the new role of the UN, etc.

Professor Lester Thurow, in his new book, *The Coming Battle among Japan, Europe and America*, has suggested that the US will remain a military overlord without a matching economic superpower. He has reminded his countrymen that Rome remained a military power even after the barbarians sacked the capital; the military simply moved to Constantinople. China was a military power behind the Great Wall as the country fell apart. Great Britain after World War II desperately and unsuccessfully tried to maintain a large military force without adequate economic basis. Now the US is hanging there like a ripe apple.

The US is no longer on a strong economic wicket. She can always bounce back under a determined leadership and with some new economic organising principles, but for many years the situation can only marginally change. Even though the US productivity is higher than that of Japan, her saving rate which was already very low, that is, seven per cent has slipped to about five per cent. The interdependence between the US, the EEC and Japan has become so deeply structured that Washington cannot extricate itself from the crisis unless its savings rate goes up.

Although the basic structure still rests on nation-states, profound political changes are taking place to erode the concepts of a nation, a nation-state, sovereignty, etc. Four developments in the recent past have come to dominate the globe, no matter how many poles survive. These are: (1) multinationals, (2) international regimes, (3) trading regimes overtaking their growth counterparts and (4) international media power. Earlier their power and hegemony were subsumed in a different order of arrangement: the security based on deterrence, the economic and information orders. The old orders got ruptured with new disorders and produced the aforementioned regimes.

There will be many diverse power poles, economic, military, political, etc. As Joseph Nye once remarked: "The distribution of power in world politics has become like *the layer cake*". The top military layer is largely unipolar, for there is no other military powers comparable to the United States. The economic middle layer is threefold. The bottom layer consists of the transnational interdependence. It is interesting to note that in the layers of power the Third World countries do not appear anywhere. For quite some time India had no significant role in the world order.

But the environment has drastically changed for the Third World countries. First, many of the LDCs which were caught in the cold and were comforted on either side, have now been unshackled even though this unshackle is creating a lot of uncertainty. Not only India

Prof J.D. Sethi is a former Member of the Planning Commission.

but such countries as Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, have been obliged to choose new options. Second, the related economic and political power has removed a lot of ideological obfuscation. Nations will have to build themselves economically and militarily either by their own effort or in cooperation with others. Third, the human rights and ecology issues which most Third World countries treated in a very cavalier fashion have surfaced. Fourth, the UN has emerged for the first time as an active international force and can give notice to any potential aggressor, as it did in the case of Iraq.

The most critical and menacing aspect of the yet ambiguous new order is that those nations which are not members of the aforementioned fourfold regime will be out of the global order's decision-making. They will be treated as new ghettos. All the major ideas or concepts used in international politics have to be redefined. Sovereignty, security, international organisation, international law, deliverance, etc., all need to be situated in the new context. One thing is quite certain. Power and domestic order will remain the most important determining factor in a world of nation-states and power-based international regimes.

Power corrupts; power without justice and purpose corrupts even more. But powerlessness corrupts most. Michael Lerner has warned us that "When we fell powerless for any extended length of time, we tend to become more willing to accept parts of the world we would otherwise reject. We act in ways that go counter to our best visions of who we are and who we can and want to be."

The Third World was a loser then and is a loser now. The main reason is the subservience of their ruling elites to the advanced nations. The middle income group nations seem to have come out of the old trap. However, the triumph of democracy in the post-Cold War phase has exposed the Achilles heels of the Third World rulers. Whatever maybe the new order, there will be unrest, violence, terrorism within the increasingly marginalised Third World. Paradoxically, the new world order has become very dangerous for us too even when it is offering new opportunities. This is because our adversaries have also got at least as many opportunities as we have got. China is galloping towards becoming a big military, economic and political power.

The global strategic environment has been radically altered, since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Consequently, all our external safety networks have disappeared overnight. The old environment gave us some scope for diplomatic initiative, despite the fact that the MEA never succeeded in optimising the benefits because of its preoccupation of image-building of Nehru-Gandhi dynasty. The Nerhuvian romanticism, the realism of Indira Gandhi and then a dramatic shift towards the utter naivety of Rajiv Gandhi, V.P. Singh, etc. led India to face a succession of foreign policy deadends.

There is a new perception among big military powers that they can internationalise a local war. On which side will intervention take place depends on their preference. Pressure would be exerted on the contending parties before any conflagration takes place. India may face such a situation. Our redefined relations with Japan and the US should give us strength to avoid war and make intervention into India become unacceptable. We have to put Pakistan on guard. The way we are trying to improve relations with China or Pakistan is most counter-productive.

All this is not going to be easy. With the end of the Cold War and the removal of the threat of the military conflict, efforts are on to create a new ruling coalition. Until such a coalition is created, we would not know the real face of the new world order. All the evidence suggests that India is not going to be a member of that coalition unless she builds a wide network of relations with Japan, the US and Israel. India's option has become sharp but narrow. She is either to accept her marginalisation or become a strategic partner with the United States if the latter is willing to accept India's needs.

India's relations with the US have entered a new phase of cooperation and conflicts. We are still at the receiving end either way. The initiative is still with the US. The same is true in respect of our relations with other nations or international regimes. The habit of repeating old *mantras* has not gone because our safety, according to our rulers, lies in inertia. We seem to forget the first principle of physics that inertia is a situation in which our external force applies force of motion.

The US is likely to keep its military presence in East Asia as well as West Asia, the areas which are of importance to us as well. With the removal of bases and other facilities the US would not be able to create a link between her forces in the West Asia and East Asia without having facilities in between. That is why India has suddenly become relevant for the US. Washington will keep attacking India on the economic issues but on security issues the two countries will come nearer.

Therefore an important lesson we must learn is that the Indo-US economic relations cannot be a strong base for our new economic policies. Even quantitatively, relations are not and cannot be as large as our globalisers imagine. The US is facing a winner-take-all economic competition with the newly integrated Europe and Japan. Her trading partners or competitors are economic superpowers. However, the mutual interpretation, intensified over the last two decades between developed capitalist economies of Europe, US and Japan have brought about a remarkable shift from the international economic system to a global one. Even if the US wanted she cannot get out. But nor can we. We must clearly see the limits and possibilities of Indo-US relations.

If the prospects of Indo-US economic relations are incremental, the scope for the Indo-US military relations is enormous. The break-up of the Soviet Union, the elimination of many US bases in Asia, the restraint Japan has put on itself or is put on it by others, the emerging of China as both a massive military and economic power, ~~etc.~~ are filling the vacuum and menacing Asia. India is one large potential ally of the US and we equally need her desperately. If we are unable to optimise our strategic relations with the US to build a defensive-offensive power, the fault will be that of our foreign policy-makers.

Japan is in trouble with both the US and Europe. The drop in the stock market prices by fifty per cent, her part disinvesting abroad in old outlets, pressure of Japanese-bashing, etc. give us scope for new kinds of relations by which we can offer Japan the opportunities and facilities for investment which we may refuse to the US. We have to learn the Japanese way of doing things if we wish the Indo-Japan relations to be an economic bulwark against China. There is asymmetry. We must work for overriding strategic relations with the US and/or even more overriding economic relations with Japan. Can India become an area of agreement between Japan and the US in order to create a new balance of power?

The world has entered—at least for a decade—a phase of global capital shortage. The demand for eastern Europe, investment for raising the standard of living in the DCCs, the rise of capital-intensive technologies and the small but rising demand from the LDCs add up to a huge total. On the other hand, generation of new capital-intensive technologies and the threat of higher oil prices could permanently damage the LDCs. India is doubly vulnerable because of her increasing dependence on imported oil. The Gulf war which cost us two to three billion dolllars had nearly brought down the whole financial system. We are the losers anyway, in recession or high capital-generating technological growth. The US is unlikely to offer us large economic support but Japan can and will if we join her in building a new Asian balance of power.

The global order cannot do for us what we are supposed to do for ourselves, namely, maintain the internal order. The successive governments have played a dangerous game of instilling in the minds of the public that foreign intervention is the main source of India's trouble. In reality the ineptness and corruption, and elite alienation disrupted the social order. Our adversaries can intervene only when the situation is propitious. No major actor in the new world order can come to our rescue. To maintain order the government relies on the police force or panders to vocal groups and terrorists. The Indian armed forces have been called too many times to support the government and thus weakened security. India may have averted the risk of disintegration, but there is nothing in the new order which can protect us from the Sino-Pak military build-up. We don't know yet the quality and thrust of Indo-US or Indo-Israel military cooperation.

The most critical challenge that India faces is the possibility of the new world order propping up powers and forces which are hostile to India. At the same time, the same order provides new opportunities for building relations with countries like the US, Japan, Germany, etc. both for security and developmental objectives. China will pose a big threat to us in another 10 years time. The threat will become more complicated and serious if Sino-Pakistan collaboration become militarily entrenched. Therefore, the most serious option that we have to work out is, new Indo-US relations. Most Americans believe that the Sino-US relations will go into serious difficulties in the next few years. This would give us additional space to build up security relations with the US. The US is applying the carrot and stick technique to test India's mettle to adjust to the situation which has changed in every respect and not too favourably for India. The break-up of the Soviet Union has liberated us from the stranglehold of some aspects of our foreign policy but it has also removed a variety of safety networks which Moscow provided. Events have not yet jolted us from our "waking sleep".

It is not surprising that Washington is attempting to extract the highest price from India for upgrading Indo-US relations, believing that India is weak and vulnerable. What is surprising is that New Delhi is caught unprepared every time a new demand is made on it. New Delhi has never prepared the nation to get ready for a prolonged struggle. India is not weak; it is her ruling elite and classes who have acquired a giving away complex.

In the past, the Indo-US relations have been partly friendly and partly adversial. This was an uneasy situation which was exploited by others,—Moscow Islamabad, and even London. The situation has changed. However, if both countries do not strike a proper deal—and each knows the cost of the deal—we can relapse into old habits. The US is currently pursuing a wrong policy of carrot and stick. India may not have the right answer but she cannot be pushed too far.

In four areas the US is exerting pressures against India: (i) the IMF-World Bank loans, (ii) trade policies, (iii) the NPT and (iv) India's space programme. New areas will come up as we proceed further. There is a method in the American strategy which is left for us to unravel. Each area does not have the same priority and the bottom line. But the crux of all these problems is that if India can get through her economic, nuclear and space programmes, the US pressures, after initial aggressiveness and threats, will gradually ease and the two nations will be truly on road to friendship. The US needs Indian support in her fight against Islamic fundamentalism, for containment of China, and achieving regional stability as we need hers for the same reasons, notwithstanding other areas of conflict.

Unfortunately, instead of preparing a national framework of a new foreign policy, New Delhi is pursuing two contradictory courses: it is insisting on continuity while succumbing to pressures of change. Old shibboleths continue. Even economic liberalisation has no framework. It is the absolute adhocism in our policies which the US is fully exploiting. We have started joint military exercises with the US, but without developing a strategic consensus between the two countries. ■

Second Round of States' Reorganisation

ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

PRADEEP KUMAR

Even though the very issue of reorganisation of the States has always been controversial, the linguistic basis of such a reorganisation had become somewhat dormant for all practical purposes after the creation of Punjab and Haryana out of the bilingual Punjab in 1966. Most of the cases of reorganisations thereafter, were either on ethnic basis (as in Meghalaya) or were simple cases of elevation of the Union Territories to the level of States for example Himachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Goa, Arunachal Pradesh, etc. Sikkim, of course, was a case of an altogether new area acceding to India. Thus, in a way, no serious attempt was made to tinker with the boundaries of the States after 1966.

However, the demands for separate Statehoods have always been raised all these years. While some of these demands have had a partly, if not wholly, linguistic basis (for example, Braj Pradesh, Uttarakhand, etc.), others have primarily resulted from the regional imbalance. The cases of Vidarbha, Telengana, Bundelkhand, Chattisgarh, east Uttar Pradesh, etc. fall in this category. The issue of a separate Jharkhand State is unique in the sense that it is perhaps the oldest movement in India which has yet to fulfil the dream of a separate tribal-dominated State. The tribals of the north-east were luckier in this matter as they could get several miniscule the States carved out on ethnic basis, in relatively a less painful manner. The recent aggravation of the agitation for the Jharkhand State has opened the entire issue of States reorganisation once again. This is primarily on account of the relatively big size of the proposed tribal State which for many agitationists includes areas of Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal and Orissa, in addition to large areas (nearly 16 districts) of southern Bihar.

The serious dissensions within the Congress party on this issue speak a lot about the popularity of the movement. It is not merely the political compositions of the State and Central Governments that have led to this dissension in the Congress circles. It may be remembered here that it was nealry two decades ago that the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, had created a Chhota-Nagpur Santhal Paragana Regional Congress Committee, to satisfy the aspirations of the Congress members of the region. This was reminiscent of the Congress doings in 1920 (Nagpur) when the party had resolved to form its Pradesh Congress Committees (PCCs) on linguistic basis without any regard to the political boundaries of the States which criss crossed the linguistic zones a great deal.

The current agitation in the tribal belt of southern Bihar has raised some of the issues which can briefly be catalogued here: the issue of a comprehensive reorganisation of States to fulfil the demands of several other sub-regions for separate Statehood; the long standing demand in some intellectual circles to break all the bigger States into smaller ones so as to create as many as 50 to 60 smaller States to make them administratively more viable; and finally, the perceived threat of linguistic and regional patriotism resulting from such a reorganisation which might ultimately pose a threat to the territorial integrity of the country.

We shall take up these issues one by one, beginning with a brief historical perspective.

II

A peep into the history of the creation of the linguistic States clearly reveals the niggardly and reluctant manner in which the Central Government has gone about it, despite the promise of a comprehensive linguistic reorganisation made at the Nagpur session of the Indian National Congress, in the year 1920. As is well known, the first linguistic State of Andhra Pradesh in the post-independence days (Orissa being the first in the pre-1947 period when the Bihar province was bifurcated in 1936), was carved out of the multilingual province of Madras in 1953, after violent agitations which claimed the life of men like Sriramulu. The Dar Commission and the JVP Committee (comprising Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel and Pattabi Sitaramayya), had rejected the linguistic basis unequivocally despite all populistic pressure. All kinds of sermonising was inflicted on the linguistic elite in the name of territorial integrity of the country that was perceived by the national leadership as having been threatened by the linguistic patriotism. The latter, in their opinion, was bound to get a fillip after the linguistic redistribution of the State boundaries. The case of Andhra was conceded only because the CPI-led movement in the northern coastal districts of Madras

The author is a Reader in the Department of Political Science, Panjab University, Chandigarh.

province had created a momentum that simply had become irresistible. Even here the Telugus had to wage a long struggle for the creation of the Visalandhra, which was conceded only in 1956 after the dismantling of the Hyderabad state. The States Reorganisation Commission, on whose recommendations the 1956-reorganisation was largely carried out, also acted in a half-hearted manner by keeping several linguistic States outside the purview, chief among them being Maharashtra, Gujarat and Punjab. These were created in the next 10 years or so, but only after the Congress lost heavily in terms of the popular support in these years.

If one seriously examines the issue of linguistic patriotism-regionalism, it becomes apparent that this apprehension was largely based on the presumption that any mass scale upsurge was bound to create trouble for the Indian state. The attempt in 1920s to induct linguism in the Indian politics, was aimed precisely at massifying, and consequently, radicalising the politics which had hitherto remained confined to the elite circles despite the efforts of making it all-comprehensible. It is different that the same strategy was found quite dangerous and inconvenient in the post-independence days for obvious reasons. While linguism or linguistic regionalism was seen in the twenties and the thirties as a device to involve more and more people into the national movement, it suddenly became a "hindrance to the national unity" in the fifties and the sixties. However, one may be reminded here of several other idioms, apart from language, that were used in the twenties and the thirties for large scale mobilisation. These included, among others, religion, such as the Khilafat movement, for ensuring Hindu-Muslim unity. While most other forms of mobilisation could not fit into the "secular" framework of the Indian polity, language fitted rather well as it often appealed on more modern and rational bases.

The niggardly manner in which the Centre gave in to this demand in the post-independence decades, naturally left many a case of half-hearted reorganisation. While no amount of efforts perhaps can really ensure full scale linguistically homogeneous States, the issue could, perhaps, have been taken up more dispassionately and liberally, without giving the impression that each time a State was created, it amounted to the Centre giving in to fissiparous tendencies, which somehow had grown with linguistic patriotism. This impression often put the entire issue of linguistic States in a rather misplaced perspective.

Here it may be important to remember that language alone has not led to fragmentation of bigger States into smaller ones. For example, a very large number of miniscule States that dot the north-eastern region of India today were created largely on ethnic basis. Similarly the States of UP, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh do not owe their existing boundaries to language. It is more an outcome of historical factors, than any linguistic principle that these States continue to have overlap areas with their neighbours, in terms of the dialects spoken in the border districts. They have been kept outside the pale of reorganisation in the name of abstract nationalism which has somehow been equated with the status quo.

III

More often than not, similies like "opening a pandora's box", "hornet's nest", etc. are used to thwart any demand for further reorganisation of States. While it is true that bifurcation or trifurcation of existing States is bound to generate and strengthen such feelings elsewhere in the country, what is not easily intelligible is the fear that it generates in the minds of not only the politicians but also some rather well-meaning intellectuals. If only to allay such fears, it is important to look at history. With the benefit of hindsight now, it can easily be discerned that linguistic regionalism has not threatened the territorial integrity of the republic. Considering the Mauryan, the Gupta and the Mughal empires as powerful on account of centralisation, and then equating centralisation with national power, is perhaps a preposterous exercise. The empires of yesteryears which flourished in feudal and semi-feudal environments cannot be relevant beyond a point. The strength and power in those days flowed not from the masses but directly from the arsenals of the ruling class. It may sound rhetorical to say that in present days the people are the source of a nation's strength, nevertheless, the democratic system, even if it is largely a "facade", makes it incumbent upon the leadership to satisfy the peoples' aspirations in political matters.

While issues of economic backwardness and social discrimination can be postponed by pleading "resource crunch" and "operational difficulties", the pure political decisions which need no large scale investment, cannot be delayed beyond a point by any party aspiring to contest elections. In such circumstances, resistance to popular pressure for Statehood, etc. may at times become counter-productive. The case of Punjab is quite obvious, where a delayed organisation in 1966 gave a handle to the Akalis that the Centre was discriminating against the Punjabis or the Sikhs, to be more precise. In no State of India can the fissiparous tendencies be ascribed to its linguistic homogeneity. In fact it is the lack of it that has led to identity crisis in Assam (vis-a-vis Bengalis), Punjab (vis-a-vis the Hindi-speaking areas in pre-sixtysix days), and Maharashtra (vis-a-vis South Indians in Bombay in the sixties). Most secessionist movements in the last decade have been either based on religion (J and K/Punjab) or ethnicity (north-eastern India). On the contrary, greater powers to the province of Quebec in Canada in the last few years have rather blunted the edge of separatism among the French-speaking Canadians there. So has the creation of smaller States in the north-east of India.

IV

It may not be out of place here to bring in an important international event, namely the disintegration of the Soviet Union into fifteen independent sovereign States. When it took place last year, a lot of hue and cry was made to make comparisons with the Indian state of affairs. In some intellectual circles it was being argued that the break up of the USSR would give a fillip to such tendencies in India. While some inspiration may always be drawn by the fissiparous tendencies from all that is going on all around the world, the Indian case has simply been incomparable with that of the USSR, where the Czarist empire had extended itself to forcibly include several areas into the Russian territory. The Yalta Conference and the role of the Red Guards in engulfing the States into the Union, is all too well known to need repetition here.

It seems that the total neglect of the democratic aspirations of the people in terms of their linguistic and regional identities, perhaps boosted the cases of secession, even though economic scarcities and Gorbachev's political philosophy played a major role in the onset of the disintegration process. Is it merely accidental that in no State of India (except perhaps in the Kashmir region of Jammu and Kashmir) the people in general have supported secession? In fact there is a very serious concern in all parts of the country against the threat of secession in J and K and Punjab. It is this concern of the Indian masses at the national level that has often been exploited by some Central leaders to fish in the troubled waters of these States for strengthening their own numerical support from other States. This is what the Congress party did in the mid-eighties. And when we say the Indian masses, we don't merely talk about the "dominant-Hindi-heartland", which has been equated with centripetalism, but also the States which have resented the Centre in most of the Centre-State bargains, and on the linguistic issues.

Similarly, those who are fascinated by the geometrical boundaries of the States in the USA, and tend to equate this with the superpower status of the country, commit the grave folly of comparing a diverse and federal society of India with a society that has a bare 500-year existence, and has been "bulldozed" by the neck-break speed of rapid and massive industrialisation in the last 200 years or so. Will it be logical to compare this "melting pot" society with the "multilayer-cake" society of ours, where each layer is distinctly clear and identifiable? Fortunately, the language has been the only major factor that really imparts a feudal character to our plural society, as it alone makes territorial organisation of diversity feasible. The caste and religion largely remain overlapped. We have used the word "fortunately" because language, despite its negative dimension of linguistic chauvinism, is the least dangerous and the least "closed" of all such other identities, as caste and race, etc.

V

The question that is being raised once again these days is that of not merely tinkering with a few political boundaries of the States, but of a comprehensive reorganisation. Now that the States were already created on linguistic basis, why do we need this reorganisation? The answer is simple: to take the logic of reorganisation of the States further.

Originally the language became a factor not only to make the State boundaries more rational but also to avoid "suppression" of one linguistic group by the other. The demand of the Oriyas for separation from Bihar and Bengal, and that of the Telugus for separation from Madras was precisely raised on these issues. The economic and cultural dominance of the Bengalis and the Tamilians in the two regions respectively, was perhaps the real basis of separatist demands that were apparently linked with the issue of regional States did not make much sense. It was the language that became a symbol of, and a forum to give expression to, the regional aspirations.

In the contemporary circumstances with the extension of democracy to several sections of the society (it being not a mere rhetoric), these aspirations have not remained confined to the linguistic elite, and have gone further to include the masses living in the lesser developed parts of these linguistic States. In most cases these pockets of underdevelopment did not have the literary forms of their dialects and the latter were, therefore, simply included in the dominant language to inflate the population of the State languages. Their own elite being relatively backward, in terms of socio-economic wellbeing and levels of political consciousness, did not have much choice except to become subservient to the dominant linguistic elite. In fact over the years, these relatively more underdeveloped regions have only experienced what one may call the "development of underdevelopment", and consequently have emerged as the classical cases of internal colonialism or Uttaranchal (Garhwal and Kumaon regions of UP), Jharkhand or Vananchal (in Bihar and some parts of Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal and Orissa), Vidarbha and Marathwada (in Maharashtra), Chhattisgarh (in Madhya Pradesh), Telengana (in Andhra Pradesh) and Konkan (the coastal areas between Bombay and Goa), are some such demands. In most of these cases the demands are not actually for linguistic reorganisation but the basis is clearly economic. The latter in fact was always there even in the original linguistic regionalism where unilingual distribution of resources in multi-lingual States was resented by the different linguistic groups. At present, quite a large number of these sub-regions within the States have a sizeable population and area to make them administratively and politically viable.

It is not merely the States like UP and Bihar which need a reorganisation (they had bypassed linguistic reorganisation) but also some of the so-called linguistic States like Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra, etc. which had themselves fought vigorously for linguistic States. In the Hindi-speaking States of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, the second reorganisation can really take care of the intra-regional imbalances in addition to providing separate States to several fullfledged dialects, which for many practical purposes are almost languages and have rich and developed literacy forms. Thus Bundelkhand, Rohail Khand, Braj, Oudh, Bhojpur, Malwa, Mahakoshal, Ghhattisgarh, etc. can be viable States. Their creation will naturally pave the way for the development of these dialects, some of which had formerly enjoyed the status

An Old Ghost's Grouse

Bidyut Sarkar's occasional column "Corrections and Clarifications" in *The Times of India* is something I read with respect and profit. He is one of those few who care for common-sense and civility in the prose used by our English newspapers.

Recently he pointed out the confusion created by arbitrary abbreviations in headlines. The abbreviations are resorted to for lack of space, but confusion occurs because the sub-editors have been too lazy. The example he gave was: "Delhi to host nat cycling". "Nat" had been used as a shortened form of "national". But that abbreviation is unknown.

Ironically, the very next day after Sarkar's column appeared, his own paper had the following headline:

"Joshi flays govt's eco policies".

There is always a Joshi in national politics. In the very old days we had N.M. Joshi, the pioneer labour leader. Then there was P.C. Joshi, the Communist. A little later Joshi stood for S.M. Joshi, the socialist. Later on Joshi meant Harideo Joshi. Now it is the turn of the BJP President, Murli Manohar Joshi. So the use of Joshi without the initials is permissible.

But what are "eco policies"?

The first sentence of the report told us that Murli Manohar Joshi attacked the Congress government's economic policies.

The trouble is that these days "eco" is commonly used as an abbreviation of "ecological" — for example, "ecosystem", "ecosphere", "eco-climate". This short form has also the sanction of *Concise Oxford*, which describes it as a prefix suggesting ecology.

If the sub-editor had spent a minute more on the headline he could have written:

"Joshi flays economic policies".

The word "policy" implies that it is governmental, especially when it is being "flayed".

Now to the word "flay" — a favourite with newspapermen, the word means "strip off the skin or hide of". But when a metaphor is used too often, it loses its force. Journalese is indeed a heap of dead skins.

H.Y.S.

of languages. Far from strengthening any fissiparous tendencies by way of setting a chain reaction in other States as feared by some, these large scale reorganisations will actually lead to 50 or 60 smaller States. Such a large number of States will, in fact, act as an insurance against any one State dominating the others. It will also ensure that no State harbours the illusion of an autonomous existence. More interdependence and greater interaction as a result of the smaller size of these States will obviously make them think more and more in terms of cross linguistic interaction. One reason for Quebec's separatist threats in Canada has been its size that accounts for a very large percentage of the French Canadians.

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However, any talk of further reorganisation of the States should not make us believe that reorganisation in itself is a panacea for all regional pulls. Issues of identity and domination of one "ethnic" group by the other are bound to remain there even if several rounds of reorganisations were to be carried out. For example, even in a tiny State like Meghalaya, there can be (and, in fact, there is) conflict between the Garos, the Khasis and the Jayantias; in another small State of Mizoram, the Mizos maybe accused of dominating over the Chakmas; in Sikkim the Nepalis may be pitted vis-a-vis the Bhotias, the Lepchas, etc.; within the proposed Jharkhand State, several tribes may come under the political domination of rather more numerous Mundas, Santhals, Orans, etc. All this however, should not lead us to abandon the idea of creation of new States. It is true that there is seemingly no end to an individual's craving for separate identity. But we should not forget that the line has to be drawn somewhere, certainly short of the anarchical view of an autonomous individual standing alone without any group identity. It must be kept in mind that there should be nothing sacrosanct even about this line, which should naturally be subject to further changes in future course of time. It is entirely possible that the craving for separation into smaller and still smaller groups, may ironically one day result in a reverse trend towards merger. After all, all demands for linguistic States were not for smaller States, and at least Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra had demanded much larger areas than they already had in their parent States; so was the case with Mysore which was enlarged by merging the Kannada-speaking areas into the larger princely state. The current trend in the European Community is one such phenomenon in the world politics where centuries of hatred and separatism have resulted in a reverse trend towards a more united Europe. No solution is ever made to bind the future societies for all times to come, and even if a step remains valid for 20-30 years, it should be welcome in the fast changing world of today where even international boundaries of the sovereign states have not remained sacrosanct. ■

Restructuring the Constitution

ARSHI KHAN

On August 15, 1947, India entered into a free political environment which provided ample opportunity to our leaders and freedom fighters to reconstruct, reform and transform our country into a popular, participatory, parliamentary democracy. The Constituent Assembly of India became the main platform of debates and discussions in order to engineer a secular representative polity. Leading political figures, jurists, academicians, intellectuals and others from cross-sections of our society took part in the Constituent Assembly debates.

The reasons, such as the creation of Pakistan on the basis of religion and community, invasion of Kashmir by Pakistan-aided army and volunteers, frequent communal riots in most part of our country, non-nationalisation or a separatist attitude of Hyderabad and Junagarh and the over-all vulnerability of our country to divisive forces made a remarkable shift from a true federal polity to a centralised federation. They invented a new role of the Union government in a federal set-up. They deliberately decided to give maximum power, privileges, sovereignty and full decisive authority to the Centre, while the States were provided with separate legislative and executive organs and limited autonomy, that too on the mercy of the Centre. As a basic principle of federalism, the Constitution did create a dual polity with division of powers but the supremacy of the Centre over the States was not avoided. Basically, the federal character and identity of States depend upon the political temper of the Centre.

The structural arrangment of our Constitution itself is responsible for damaging the very fabric of our federal polity and society. Some non-federal tendencies such as the role of the Finance Commission, constitutitional devices for the Governor, possession of the residuary powers by the Centre, development of extra-constitutional bodies such as the Planning Commission, provisions for the President's rule and Emergency powers retained by the Centre—to alter, create or dissolve the boundary or name of the State or States, Centre's interference into the legislative, executive and financial fields of the States, etc. have-been detrimental to the federal-political edifice of our country.

There is much similarity between the Act of 1935 and the Constitution of India. Around 75 per cent of the 1935 Act was xeroxed in our Constitution. The 1935 Act envisaged a powerful Centre on the one hand and devolution of powers to the provinces on the other. In brief, it created a decentralised polity without granting autonomy to the provinces. Britain and France are well known to have a wide network of devolutionary political system but they are not federal polities. In our country all efforts were made to talk and extend decentralisation in our polity without optimum autonomy. Since 1861, we have, most of the time, experienced decentralisation. A federal polity is the ultimate result of two phenomena, that is, autonomy and decentralisation at the State, regional or provincial levels.

The author is a Research Fellow in the Indian Institute of Federal Studies, New Delhi.

During the debates in the Constituent Assembly (1948), Loknath Mishra of Orissa said that the Constitution was "laying the foundation more for a formidable unitary Constitution than a federal one" (Constituent Assembly Debates, Vol. VI, p. 241). H.V. Pataskar of Bombay criticised the idea of a strong Centre which the members of the Constituent Assembly had developed at the second reading stage of Constitution-making. For the strength of the Centre, they favoured the idea of maintaining the strength of the units. "The power of the Centre must flow from the States which in the first place must be made strong and powerful (CAD, Vol. XI, pp. 970-74). Some scholars have described our Constitution, as federal and quasi-federal.

It is also said that the Constituent Assembly of India was not a representative body due to the absence of adult franchise. The Congress dominated the Assembly and debates. Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr B.R. Ambedkar, Sardar Patel and Dr Rajendra Prasad had silenced dissent within, as well as outside. Dr Ambedkar emerged as the chief architect of the Constitution. He was an extremely wise, logical and impressive personality. He liked a strong and united Centre, much stronger than the Centre created under the 1935 Act. He praised the existence of a strong Centre engineered by the British empire in India. In a way he extended legitimacy to the British legacy of a centralised administration. Dr Ahir says in his book, *Dr Ambedkar and Indian Constitution*: "Though a good number of the amendments moved by the members were accepted by the Constituent Assembly but no amendment was accepted by the House unless it was acceptable to Dr Ambedkar."

As many as 7635 amendments were tabled and 2447 were actually moved in the House. Some members hailed him as the modern Manu. His efforts were strongly supported and supplemented by all "Centralists", particularly Nehru, Dr Rajendra Prasad and Sardar Patel. Provincialists who always demanded autonomy for provinces and a full federal apparatus for our polity, were defeated and silenced by the, "Centralist" Congress elites.

Moreover, the Congress elites ignored the political and social ideas of Mahatma Gandhi. He had a distinct vision of India in which all citizens were supposed to enjoy the fruits of freedom. He was the person whose ideas reached out to the Indian masses. But his ideas were partially included in the Directive Principles of State Policy which is non-justiciable. However, he could not emerge as a "messiah" in the Constituent Assembly dominated by the urban Western-educated Congress elites.

The partition of *Bharatvarsha* authenticated the demands of the Centralists to proceed for a dual polity marked by a strong Centre and weak States. In order to provide a national stamp of approval, the framers of the Constitution emphasised national security and later economic development. Nevertheless they considered the Constitution as an instrument of social engineering and nation-building.

It would be perhaps untrue to call India as a land of different nationalities. But India is certainly a country of different regions which mirrors diversity. However, the concept and awareness of Pan-Indianism is inherent in the psyche of every Indian, which guarantees stability and unity in diversity. A single all-India market has also been a catalyst in cementing the very base of national unity.

Intra-regional and inter-regional disparities have already surfaced. Regionalism and regional agitations have unveiled their faces due to the failure of the Constitution and the Central government to recognise and satisfy regional aspirations. The sixty-year old Jharkhand issue is still unresolved. In the meanwhile, various regions have asserted themselves to get Statehood– Bhojpur, Mithila, Koshal, Telangana, Vidarbha, Bodoland, Chhattisgarh, Gorkhaland, Uttranchal, Bundelkhand, Ladakh, etc. Some of the regional agitations have turned into secessionism and separatism. Centre-State relations have worsened during the period of four decades.

Centralisation of power is becoming the general trend in our polity. Growth of various communal and anti-national elements and groups have become a serious threat to our social fabric. The Constitution has no concrete mechanism to avoid and preclude the proliferation of communal elements in politics. Money and muscle power have now become the stamp of approval in all elections. Besides, there are many other issues such as human rights, communl riots and caste violence, political parties, etc. on which our Constitution is silent.

Now the time has changed. Our Constitution was a response to a particular situation. There is now a big difference between 1950 and 1992. Restructuring of the Constitution is intended to cultivate an in-built capacity and mechanism to face the present crisis, but it certainly needs to be free from those provisions which smell of the legacy of the British paramountcy and centralisation of power.

Major changes are required in the Constitution to envisage a federal, participatory polity in which States should not remain weak and fully dependent upon the Centre. The new Constitution is supposed to accommodate the demands for strong States, smaller States, regional development councils, harmonious Centre-State relations, political parties, human rights and secular polity. The Election Commission has been so far, partially successful in conducting free and violence-free elections. New constitutional provisions are required to guarantee free and democratic elections. Communalisation of politics need to be checked and thwarted. It has become an easy job for political parties to violate the Constitution. Religiosity in politics is an ominous trend. It must be rooted out. Religious fundamentalism, be it of majority or minority, may push a country like India into turmoil.

Since the explosion of the "Ayodhya bomb", emotions and sentiments of the majority have been manipulated by some political parties and groups to express hatred against secularism, tolerance, Indo-Islamic culture and democracy. Press and electronic media have been misused to pursue a narrow and chauvinistic goal. In the name of liberty and freedom, anti-human and anti-minority rhetorics have been propagated publicly. Riots after riots were engineered to cripple a particular section of society. Means of education, particularly history and oral instructions, are now undergoing a drastic change from a modern-liberal way to a Hindu-chauvinistic thought. Myths are replacing historical facts.

It is here that we need to realise a blow to our composite culture and secular polity. The Constitution needs to be more viable to establish a responsible government and vigilant society. At present we need to have a fresh look at the Constitution to transfer India into a harmonious and federal nation. There is nothing wrong in making a new Constituent Assembly to decide the present and the future of India. All these changes will not be destructive but constructive so far as our national unity is concerned. The doctrine of consent, concession and participation can only be a panacea to the problems facing the Indian sub-continent. Our ultimate objectives are peace, democracy and development which we must ensure.

Nehruji once said that "a Constitution to be living must be growing, must be adaptable, must be changeable." ■

Need for Development Vision

AVIJIT PATHAK

Intellectuals, political activists, social scientists—everyone, it seems, is fond of writing on development. Because development has always been endowed with a meaning—a meaning attached to technology and environment, science and religion, economy and polity. That's why, development as a theme has always invited a spectrum of viewpoints. Marxists, Gandhians, spiritualists, environmentalists, feminists, technologists—all participate in the ongoing debate on development and, as a result, each new book on development arouses one's interest; one is eager to know how the world is redefining its priorities, looking at its brutalities and pathologies.

Yet, when one begins to read Ghorpade's book, one finds it utterly disappointing. The book is without its intensity, without a sharp focus. The book raises no deeper questions related to the sociology of modernisation and development. Ghorpade may, however, argue that he has written about planning and employment, agriculture and rural development and about Centre-State relationships. So what more can one expect?

M.Y. Ghorpade, *Development Ethos and Experience*, A Southern Economist Publication, Bangalore, 1991, pp. 281 price Rs. 150/.

While appreciating Ghorpade's concerns it should, however, be mentioned that a book, in order to assert itself as a good book, should contain not just fragments of information, political relationships, journalistic generalisations and a package of moral messages ("a partyless democracy at the panchayat raj"/"matriculates and graduates ploughing the land with knowledge and dignity"/"politicians must agree to observe a common political code and eschew association with communal elements"): A good book should stimulate one to think, go deeper and raise fundamental questions. It is precisely for these reasons that Ghorpade's book fails to sustain one's interest; none would like to read it twice.

This, however, does not mean that Ghorpade is incapable of surprising us, providing us with new insights. Ghorpade— an economist with a profound experience at the grass-roots level— one hopes, will subsequently come forward with a new book: more thoughtful, analytical and stimulating. With this hope this reviewer intends to provoke the author, make him confront his unbearable contradictions. It is better to focus on his ideology and worldview. Because, that would ultimately reveal his mind, the way he looks at all the empirical details related to budgets, employment, panchayatraj, rural energy and reservations.

As one reads the book, one finds Ghorpade expressing his happiness with everyone: Gandhi, Nehru, Indira and Rajiv. All of them, he would argue, help him to evolve his vision of development. And this is really surprising. Is it a serious thoughtful endeavour? Or is it a public-relations exercise? Because it is difficult to believe how one committed to the Gandhian vision of development can be so easily impressed by Indira and Rajiv. With Indira Gandhi's ruthless, aggressive politics (and everything is 'justified in the name of 'development' and 'national' integration') modern India witnessed some of her traumatic moments. Ghorpade remains silent about it. Where is his Gandhian *satyagraha*, Gandhian dissent?

Likewise, if one really takes Mahatma Gandhi seriously, is it possible to give one's consent to Rajiv's twentyfirst century fantasy: a development package designed to seduce the aggressive, hedonistic middle class? No such questions are raised. Instead, there are only pleasantries: "Power did not adorn Indira Gandhi; she adorned power "/ "Rajiv Gadhi's hands must be strengthened and the Congress organisation, which has made history for a hundred years, should be revitalised and made to fully reflect the positive aspirations and values of modern India".

And finally about Nehru. Ghorpade likes Nehru, That is his privilege. But never does he look at contemporary India critically; never does he see how the Nehruvian vision is collapsing. He does not examine the discontents of the modernising mission implicit in the Nehruvian vision of development, the danger of its homogenising...hegemonising impulses, its insensitivity to local cultures and traditions. Modernity too can be oppressive. Perhaps it has never occurred to Ghorpade's mind. And it is this absence of spirit that explains why he fails to see the limits of the Nehruvian 'scientific temper' in a plural tradition like ours.

In other words, Ghorpade's book takes us nowhere. Read the book and say everyone is fine: Rammohan, Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Gandhi, Nehru, Indira, Rajiv and Ghorpade! No dialectics anywhere. No critical spirit.

That is not the way, Ghorpade. Write another book, enlighten us, tell us what ought to be told. ■

COMMUNICATION You have betrayed our trust....

AN OPEN LETTER TO DR MANMOHAN SINGH

Dear Mr Singh,

A little more than a year ago, you shot into limelight when Prime Minister Narasimha Rao picked you from a bunch of hopefuls and made you the Finance Minister of this country. It was a prestigious post but there wasn't exactly a stampede for it. It was considered a hot seat, with the country poised for an economic catastrophe.

The choice was widely appreciated. You came loaded with tremendous and invaluable experience in economic affairs. Gained not in the course of running a Ministry as a politician-or worse, overlooking a department as the all-knowing IAS official. You were the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India. You were an economist in head and heart. In addition to your academic qualifications and experience, you had the reputation of being a non-controversial and upright official. You were not known to call a spade a hammer. And you had interacted closely with most of the government and Opposition leaders in the past.

I must admit that you started off in a most impressive manner. Like me, there must have been millions of other Indians who applauded your every move and statement in those early months. I rubbed my hands in glee at the discomfiture of the Congress when you matter-of-factly announced that it was not possible to honour the election manifesto promise to roll back prices in 100 days time. Finally, I said to myself, here's a Finance Minister who talked what made economic sense rather than populist sense.

My admiration for you grew on noticing the way you went about setting right the economy. You ignored the jibes of your partymen and those of the Opposition as you appealed to the IMF for financial assistance; as you went about wooing the NRIs scattered all over the world, to invest in India. I understood the humiliation of performing such a task, but it was necessary for the sake of the nation and you did it.

On the other hand, you went about dismantling the various obstacles to the growth of Indian industry. The licence-quota-permit raj was partially dismantled, a number of industries were decontrolled. You took some unpopular and harsh decisions in the interest of the Indian economy. Brakes were applied on bank credits, thereby causing hardships to the small businessman. The automobile industry was badly hit because the banks cut off finance to purchase vehicles. I took a philosophical view of the thing. I felt that having pampered ourselves for long, it was time to face the hardships to ensure a better future.

So, I did not vehemently object to the soaring prices and deepening recession. I consoled myself by dreaming of the good things in store for us, although I felt the pinch of the present as sharply as did the others who howled in protest and resentment. I, Dr Singh, still had faith in your healing powers. More than that, I had faith in you as I perceived you an honest politician, a rare species nowadays.

Sad as I am to acknowledge it, but the fact is that you flattered to deceive. The exposure of the multi-million scam also exposed your unknown persona. I do not know whether the new identity was in-built in you or that you developed it in the year-long innings as a politician, surrounded as you were by some of the world's most consummate politicians. Maybe a streak of the former was in you that flared up when catalysed by your environment.

Even several days after the scam became public, you maintained a stoic silence. How could you! I was surprised. That a man of integrity should not utter a word to condemn what is now regarded as the biggest financial scandal the nation has faced, baffled me. Still, I thought, maybe you were waiting for details, and doubtless, you would come down heavily on those involved or responsible in due course of time.

In due course of time, however, your utterances and behaviour turned more mysterious. Such an attitude behoved more a third-rate politician, not you. You jumped in support of the RBI Governor like he was your relative caught with his pants down. That gentleman should have quit on moral grounds the day the large-scale manifestations of the scam were known. As a former RBI chief yourself, you would have known that the scandal could not have taken place but for the laxity of the RBI.

Please tell me, if a bank chairman can be given the marching order, why should the RBI Governor be spared? If a ministerial rank holder and management-genius can be arrested, why could not the Governor be similarly treated?

You chose to punish some insignificant officials of the RBI and have (so far) allowed the RBI chief to complete his tenure. May I ask you—what is it about Venkitaraman that compels you to support him so recklessly and so blindly?

Of course, no replies can be expected. What do you have to say? Your metamorphosis from an honest economist to a lowly politician was complete when you backed two of your colleagues who had attempted to surreptitiously influence a section of the JPC to investigate the scam. Incidentally, the JPC has declared that the RBI had knowledge of the scam a year ago. So what was your blue-eyed Governor doing all this time?

You have lost my trust, Finance Minister. And the trust of millions of Indians like me. You have betrayed us. Perhaps you can salvage your prestige even now, if you go—something you should have done weeks ago.

Will you oblige?

Vasco-da-gama,
Goa

Yours distraught,
Rajesh Singh

Give Rajya Sabha a New Avatar

R. L. M. PATIL

The founding fathers of our Constitution did hardly have mental ease or opportune time to prepare a thorough-bred basic document to govern the country. The division of the country physically and psychologically, its ghastly consequences, the war over Kashmir, the princes' recalcitrance, fears of administrative breakdown were but a few of the facts of the grim situation under which they worked to produce a Constitution. Not surprisingly, therefore, the Constitution of India suffers from a number of structural imbalances and conceptual ambiguities.

If the defects noticed in the constitutional architecture of India are not set right in time, the whole edifice may crumble down. Also, it should be borne in mind that a shoddy or extensive approach to the repair work might also hasten the collapse of the system. Under such a circumstance it should be prudent to locate one or two nodal parts of the system and replace them immediately.

In this context the Rajya Sabha comes to prominence. "One of the most vexing questions of political science is the problem of second chambers." wrote Sir S.N. Rau in his *Constitutional Precedents* which was used as a basic material by the makers of our Constitution. But Rau's poser was mere rhetorical. The second chamber in India's constitutional history has never been meaningful. Started first under the Government of India Act 1919, it has remained more or less unchanged uptil now. It did not assume the intended federal character under the Government of India Act 1935 since the federal aspect of the Constitution never came into being.

Under the new dispensation when the present Constitution was drafted, the second chamber was given more respectability and power, but at the same time, its character as a companion of the popular House in a unitary system of government remained unaltered. In fact not much attention was bestowed by the Constitution-makers while preparing draft provisions dealing with the second chamber or the Council of States. The discussions on the subject in the Constituent Assembly too were sketchy and scanty. Only on two brief occasions did they refer to it, and that too in July and August 1947 when the partition of the country had seized the minds of the leaders and the public. "In both the cases the debate centred on the role of the second chambers in modern *democracies*; the place of an upper house in federal legislatures was discussed only once, and then cursorily," (Granville Austin). By far the strongest justification of continuance of an upper house in the new regime came from N. Gopalaswami Ayyangar a leading light of the Constitution Drafting Committee: "the need for a second chamber has been felt practically all over the world wherever there are federations of any importance," he said, and yet he did not adduce any reason to justify the retention of the Council of States of any *federal* grounds.

A suggestion had crossed the mind of Sir B.N. Rau that, there could be provided, in the Council of States an equal representation to the constituent units of the new India. But it was dropped like a hot potato when it became obvious that the new Council of States would then be dominated by the representatives of the princely states. While the Congressmen would by all their expertise continue to dominate the House of the People (Lok Sabha), hardly any body in the Constituent Assembly wished that the other house should become a forum for others. Hence the Council of States was fashioned to facilitate dignified and cool but non-decisive debates befitting the upper chamber of a unitary state.

In its work over the past four decades the Rajya Sabha has hardly given indications of its being anything other than what it was intended to be by the Constitution-makers. Perhaps on a few occasions its performance has been below expectations, as for example, when its members voted for Indira Gandhi's imposition of internal emergency in 1975, or approved the infamous Constitutional Amendments (39 and 42), or brought tears to the the Chairman Dr Shankar Dayal Sharma through their disorderly behaviour sometimes ago.

It may be worthwhile now to take a second look at the nature and justification of the Rajya Sabha. By its name and position it is ideally suited to be the protector of the States. If only its composition and power as presently enumerated in the Constitution could be amended, the Rajya Sabha might truly emerge as the balancer of then federal system and the saviour of the Constitution.

Most of the ills of our present constitutional system can be traced to the extraordinary powers given to or exercised by the Central government over the States. Appointment/control of the Governors of States, and imposition of Central rule over the States through Governors are but two of the examples of Centre's vise-like grip over the powers and status of the States.

Secondly, the source of structure and conceptual weakness of our Constitution can be traced to the superimposition of the United States' notions of federalism

Dr Patil teaches in the Department of Politics, Bangalore University.

and judicial review over the British Westminster model of parliamentary government. In the British system the Parliament is supreme whose leader, the Prime Minister, advises the Head of the state. There is no Supreme Court in Britain to pronounce acts of the Parliament *ultra-vires*, nor is there any government at the provincial or State level to share legislative or executive power with the Parliament or the Prime Minister. But in India, we have got a Constitution whose chemistry is not sound; uncompoundable elements have been soldered rather loosely, and pained off with deceptively attractive colours.

The potential and current practice of undesirable Central intervention in State affairs can be stopped with the bestowal of powers of supervision on the Rajya Sabha over the Central government in so far as the State administration is concerned. Presently the President of India who is the Head of the state is guided by the advice of the Prime Minister who is the head only of the Central government of India. This constitutional relationship between the two should continue without a change—but should be confined only to the affairs of the Central government. On matters of States administration the President need not any more be guided by the advice of the central government leader, the Prime Minister. The role of advising the President on affairs of the States could as well be entrusted to the Rajya Sabha which should be a compact body representing the interests of the constituent State units of the federation of India. For this purpose one might consider the redesignation of the Governors as Vice-Presidents of India elected by the respective States and made members of the Rajya Sabha. The Constitution should also be amended so as to make it mandatory for the President or the Union Council of Ministers to receive endorsement of the Rajya Sabha in matters affecting the status, rights and powers of the States, as for example, the appointment of Governors, (if he is not to be elected), the imposition of Central rule or the dismissal of Chief Ministers or mid-term polls to the State Assemblies, assent to State bills reserved for the Presidential consideration, constitutional amendments, and appointment of high federal officers like the Judges of the Supreme Court, members of the UPSC, UGC, Election Commission etc.

If re-cast, the Rajya Sabha could come to discharge the much-needed role of a constitutional arbiter between the Centre and the States as we all as obviate the hazardous exercise of overhauling the Constitution. It might as well be a viable Inter-State and Centre-State Council. In short, the Rajya Sabha in a new avatar-say, in the form of Rajyapal Sabha—would be the master control-switch to correct the imbalances in the functioning of the present Constitution. ■

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Religion and Human Rights

GOBINDA MUKHOTY

When Gokhale said that freedom is our birthright, he did not mean simply political freedom. He felt that in a free society, Human Rights would be available to all. Such rights *inter alia* mean freedom from want; freedom so that nobody can abuse another person's body and mind. Freedom means to be able to air freely his or her views on any subject. Such a right means freedom to be religious or an atheist. Such right means that he or she cannot be subjected to arbitrary arrest or torture. Such a right also means that all these above freedoms cannot be taken away by the state.

Expounding the scope of Article 21 of the Constitution, the Supreme Court of India said that everyone has the right to live with dignity. That is why, our Constitution ensured and resolved to secure to all the citizens: "Justice, social, economic and political;

liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;

and to promote among them all fraternity, assuring the dignity of the individual.

Human Rights Charter of the United Nations (December 10, 1948) and two United Nations Convenants—International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights January 3, 1975 and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (March 23, 1976) are extremely important qua human rights. The Charter and the Convenants unambiguously and unhesitatingly declared:

(a) All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

(b) Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in the Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status...

(c) Everyone has the right to life, liberty and the security of person;

(d) No one shall be held in slavery or servitude: slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

(e) No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

(f) All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law, etc.

(g) No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

There are 30 Articles of which only seven, that also in truncated form, are given above.

The author is a Senior Advocate in the Supreme Court of India, and a well-known figure in the civil rights movement. This contribution was presented by him at the Indian Social Institute, New Delhi (September 1992).

What do major religions have to say about human rights?

As far as the Hindu religion is concerned, in Chapter 6, *Shloka* 31, *Srimad Bhagwat Gita*, says: "A Yogi who finds Me in everything, and prays to Me being in everything, is a proper Yogi and he is with Me." It clearly means that if you are a pious Hindu or for that matter *Ram Bhakta*, you must *see god* in every human being, be he a Hindu, Muslim, Christian or an Atheist.

Vivekananda, the great exponent of Hinduism, asked: "Where are you searching for God, when God is in front of you in his various manifestations? He who serves humanity with love and humility, is serving God." The Guru of Vivekananda, Rama Krishna Paramhansa, said: "I have prayed to God by going to temple. I have prayed to God in a Christian way by going to a church and I have prayed to God in a Mohammedan way by going to a mosque, and I have found that one can reach Godhead through any of these and other religions."' This is the Truth.

Lord Buddha rebelled against Hindu fundamentalists. But Hindus ultimately accepted this rebel as one of the ten *avatars* of God, proclaiming thereby that even rebels are not outside the God's domain.

Hiduism indeed found Godhead in Baraha (the pig), Kurma(the tortoise), Mina(the fish) and Bamana(the Midget).

The message is clear. God is in every being and everywhere. He is all-prevading and is omnipresent. Therfore, a true Hindu cannot make disparaging remarks about people belonging to other faiths. Verily, in that event, he will cease to be a Hindu.

As far as Christianity is concerned, it says: "For that which befalleth the sons of men, befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast; for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again."—(Ecclesiastes 3).

St. Mathew says: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despite-fully use you and persecute you;

"That ye may be the children of your father which is in Heaven: for He Maketh his Sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

" Be ye therefore, perfect, even as your father which is in Heaven is perfect."

"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their tres passes neither will your Father forgive you trespasses".

St. John said: "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you." He further says: "If a man say, I Love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he had not seen?

"And this commandment we have from Him, that He who loveth God love his brother also." Obviously, this brother is the mankind at large.

Every chapter of Koran starts with: "In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful". In the Chapter called daylight, it proclaims: "Therefore, do not wrong the orphan, or chide away the beggar. But proclaim the goodness of your God."

In great humility, Prophet proclaimed in the Chapter called, The Cave: "If the waters of the sea were ink, with which to write the words of my Lord, the sea would surely be consumed before His words are finished, though we brought another sea to replenish it." In the Chapter called, The Creator, Paigamber proclaimed: "If it was Allah's will to punish men for their misdeeds, no one creature would be left alive on the surface of the earth". In the Chapter called Luqman, Mohammad said: "Do not treat men with scorn, nor walk proudly on the earth. Allah does not love the arrogant and the vain-glorious. Rather let your gait be modest and your voice low: the harshest of voices is the braying of the ass." In the Chapter called Cow, it is said: "To Allah belongs the East and the West, whichever way you turn there is the face of Allah. He is omnipresent and all knowing."

What is the difference then between Hinduism, Christianity and Islam?

According to Bahaiullah: "We are all leaves and trunks of the same tree."

Sai Baba said: Treat others in the same way as you would like them to treat you. And do not inflict pain by word or deed or even thought to others. That is the way to gain Santhi. That is the way a man could earn others' love. Avoid in you behaviours, your actions and your speech all trace of desire to pain others, to insult others or to cause loss or misery to others." He commands: To help the helpless is the only way to please, follow and reach Him. Further: "love, respect, tolerance, mutual cooperation, forbearance, these must flow from the hearts of all towards all. You are all limbs of one body". He further says: "Love is joy, love is power, love is light, love is God."

This is the fundamental of religion. Religion cannot see any difference between man and man, man and woman and woman and woman. Perhaps, in the Article 14 of the Indian Constitution, there is a glimpse of the essence of religion when its says: "All are equal in the Eyes of Law."

But, unfortunately, through the centuries, religion has not grown. Instead, fundamentalism, blind faith in fundamentalism, intolerance to the religions, have grown in such a way that the spirit of religion has become irrelevant, and blind dogmas and intolerance in the name of the religion have crept in.

In the medieval times, in the name of Christianity, the so-called Christians started crusade against non-Christians and in the process destroyed property and annihililated a large number of people belonging to differnt faith.

In Iran, not may years ago, intolerance reigned supreme and throttled ordinary people's human rights. Muslim women were denied their human rights interpreting precepts a religion in a way, which gives dominance of men over women. A *fatwa* has been issued against a writer asking for his head and the murderer has been promised both money and paradise. The author's crime: he has slighted Paigamber.

Coming to our country, in Punjab, we find God's children are being killed by God's children in the name of the great Sikh religion, whereas Guru Nanak could never conceive of killing even a fly, and after his death all people of all faiths claimed his body.

On the issue of Babri Masjid-Rama Janmabhoomi, a section of the Hindus and Muslims are taking hard lines. One community is proclaiming that there will be bloodshed if Rama's temple is not built, and another community is insistent that there will be bloodshed if the masque is destroyed. Is there any difference between Rama and Rahim? In the wake of *ratha yatra* of a great leader, there have been killings of members of the other community.

To my mind, this fight between two, three or four religions is not really a religious fight. These are fights between fundamentalists. They do not try to understand the true sense of religion. They are intolerant to other Indians which is anti-thesis to the proper religious thinking. And obviously, this type of movement whether by Hindus, Muslims or Christians is deadly against the concept of human rights. Because in the name of religion one individual belonging to one community hates another individual belonging to another community and is prepared to murder him even. No religion can support such an attitude; but then that is the reality today.

It is a trite saying, perhaps, that the very irreligious people in the name of religion are playing havoc with the destiny of the country and the people, and in the process human rights, as we know of, are being violated and will be violated if there cannot be a total halt to these fissiparous and non-religious tendencies. People of different communities have lived in this country for centuries. People of different opinions and different beliefs have lived in this country for centuries. We cannot claim like Hiter, the purity of race. We are a mixed people; we have in our blood Hindu blood, Muslim blood, Christian blood and aheist blood. Because of this, our greatest asset has been secularism and this great secularism cannot be allowed to be truncated by intolerant people, by the so-called faithfuls and the fundamentalists.

All right-thinking people of different communities must be able to sit together as they sit in panchayats and solve the problems in a secular way, which is the basis of any religion. No law courts, no government, no legislature can solve this problem. It has to be solved by the people and for the people – people who are all children of God and in whom God reside, according to Hindu religion, according to Christianity and according to Islam. ■

TRIBAL PROBLEM

Groping in Daylight

ABHAY JHA

The first Prime Minister of independent India reflected upon the tribal situation and three distinct options with regard to its tribal population in the background of the British attitude of "benign indifference" toward them.

The three options were:

(a) leave the tribals alone, and allow them to continue to live in relative isolation untouched by modern civilisation and the process of socio-economic change, a continuation of the British disposition;

(b) bring them into the mainstream of national development and integrate them, socially, economically, politically and culturally – a merger without leaving any distinctive identity; and

(c) protect and promote the essence and the best of their traditions and culture, even as they are exposed to modern science, medicine, education as a part of the process of development.

Nehru had strongly projected the third as the best alternative, that meshed with the vision of India, the Preamble, the Directive Principles, the Fundamental Rights and various other policy perspectives adumbrated in the various policy statements.

Apart from articulating the canons of a Democratic Republic as applicable to all citizens – egalitarianism, universal adult franchise, etc., we had evolved specific policy measures such as "protective discrimination" in order to provide a fillip to the weak and the disadvantaged so that they do not lag behind for all times. Even the process of socio-economic development was designed, in explicit terms, to minimise regional imbalances and to promote accelerated development of people lagging behind in socio-economic terms.

We had gone further in providing for special tribal components in our design for planned social change, created special instrumentalities like the Chairman for Scheduled Tribes (to oversee and monitor the process and the impact of development) and the like in order to eliminate 'middlemen', and to provide a thrust in translating policy into reality.

Complex social problems call for matching (adequate and appropriate) responses, often a judicious mix of socio-economic psychological components, evolved identification, definition and consensus, within the framework of an ideology summed up in the Indian context by the expression 'Welfare State'. Distortions in the policy process could lead to a mis-match between the problem and policy, leading to a decisive but negative impact on its efficacy, ultimately resulting in aggravating and complicating the problem. Naxalism glaringly illustrates the point, a case of distortions on policy process.

The problems of tribals have been seen for many years by the various political parties as a problem of Naxalism ever since the label got fixed to the gut issues of 'development' of the community. The problem was subjected to a partisan-politics approach, but without a holistic analysis. The process was distorted as different political parties approached it as an issue to beat the party in power with, instead of perceiving it as a 'national' problem demanding consensus process and a development perspective in consonance with the concept of the welfare state and democratic ethic.

When the partisan policies did not yield the desired or desirable results but led to unintended consequences – violence being its most visible manifestation – policies were evolved to treat the symptom as one of 'law and order'. Responsibility for the management of the problem was passed on to the 'Law and Order' administration which not merely 'accepted' the primary responsibility for its management, but reinforced it as nothing more than a 'law and order' problem. The professional task, responsibility of analysis and redefinition of the problem, the policy perspectives, appropriateness and adequacy of the police organisation to manage the problem were neither debated within the police, nor articulated before the political executive. In other words, policies formulated by the political executive were 'accepted' as 'given' by the professional administration; their own contribution to the analysis of the problem and policy formulation was nearly absent.

Having accepted the ill-defined problem and inadequate policy frame, the law-and-order machinery chased the problem. Demanding and securing additional powers, more stringent laws, frequent use of preventive detention, special codes for summary trials, stiff punishment for possessing arms, opening up new police stations and outposts, provision of sophisticated arms, increased mobility and communication (paradoxically, not with the affected community), induction of paramilitary forces, such as grey-hounds to strengthen local police, special policing in sensitive areas, co-ordination among different security forces through institutional arrangements resulted in the growth in members not only of police but different police organisations/units (aggravating problems of co-ordination) with any solution to the problem nowhere in sight. Further demands such as issue of identity cards to the residents, only confirm the conversion of tribal development into a law-and-order problem – a police problem.

It is no more the tribals alone but we the citizens, the government and the police organisations who find ourselves at crossroads due to the distortions in policy and its process. Which way should we turn, to reach the welfare state? We seem to find ourselves groping in daylight. ■

She fought the Nuclear Bomb

V. SUDARSHAN

If there was one recurring theme in all of Petra Kelly's actions and life – and one she liked to quote often – it was Martin Luther King's Christmas message in 1967: "Even today I still dream that one day there will be an end to war and that men will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks, that nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

Petra Karin Kelly was then twenty years old, serving her apprenticeship in social activism as a student in the United States, protesting against its military involvement in Vietnam. She was motivated by the writings of Thoreau, the activism of Martin Luther King and the philosophy of non-violence espoused by Mahatma Gandhi. Considering all this her death – "It could be a joint suicide, a murder with suicide or murder" – contains in it elements of an unseemly irony. Once the best known face of protest, partly because of its photogenic quality, there was further irony to come because of the initial problem of identification that the decomposed state of her body presented alongwith that of her companion Gerd Bastian a former Major General.

West Germany's anti-nuclear and environmentalist Green Party, which Petra Kelly helped found and which first entered the Bundestag in March 1983, and described variously as 'anti-party party' and an 'amalgam of people with grievances' and a 'lobby for people without lobbies' had in Petra Kelly its most visible and articulate representative.

Petra Kelly whose family name was Lehmann was born in Gunzberg, Bavaria on November 29, 1947. After her journalist father abandoned his family, her mother married Lieutent Colonel John E. Kelly who adopted her and he family moved to the US where she got her BA from the American University in Washington, DC in 1970. A frail child, she spent as many as three of her childhood years in hospitals where she underwent several kidney operations. But even more traumatic than this was the death in 1970 of her 10 year-old half-sister after a three-year bout with eye cancer. There is some speculation that Petra Kelly's belief that overdoses of radiation treatment at a Hiedelberg clinic contributed substantially to her sister's death may have helped to motivate her opposition to nuclear armaments and power plants.

In 1968 she worked as a volunteer for the campaign of Robert F. Kennedy and after his assassination, in the office of Hubert H. Humphrey. She took a Masters of Political Science from the University of Amsterdam in 1971 before joining the staff of the European Community even though she considered it a "corrupt organisation squandering a lot of taxpayers money". She worked there for 12 years, contributing 50 per cent of her salary to the Greens.

Impressed with the idealism of the West German Chancellor, Willy Brandt, she joined his Social Democratic Party only to leave it in 1978 in protest against its policy of defence, energy, health and women under Brandt's successor as Chancellor, Helmut Schmidt. She left also to found the Green Party (*Die Grunen*), initially a loosely organised political party with her friends. One of her closest companions who accompanied her to meetings and demonstrations was her maternal grandmother, Kuningude Birle.

At first the Greens were little more than a rag-tag organisation of pacifists, feminists, former Marxists and ecologists who were opposed to such projects as the extention of the Frankfurt airport and who were easily worked up about the environmental consequences of chemical pollution and nuclear power plants. But in 1979 when the Schmidt Government accepted the NATO plan of stationing American intermediate-range nuclear missiles in German soil against the Soviet Union, the Greens found an unifying issue in their opposition to that plan.

Petra Kelly's biographers will also note that her companion in her somewhat murky death, Gerd Bastian, also dates back to this momentous period in her life and the life of the Green Party. Bastian was forcibly retired from the army in 1980 for opposing the deployment.

In 1982 she quit the EC to devote herself more fully to German politics, campaigning for as many as twenty hours a day. In the elections of March 6, 1983 alongwith the victory of Kohl's Christian Democratic-Free Democratic coalition, the Greens received 5.3 per cent of the votes moving into the 498-member Bundestag for the first time with 27 representatives.

Writing of the entry of the Greens in the London *Times*, Michael Binyon said: "It enfranchises a generation of disaffected youth. It brings to fruition the student revolt that began in Berlin in 1968 against the accepted norms and values. It symbolises the power and influence throughout the country now of the 'Alternatives', of those who previously opted out but have now been co-opted in."

The innate disparate nature of the Greens, its internal conflicts and its inability to maintain party unity helped to send the movement down the road to self-destruction. Petra Kelly and her 'fundamentalist' faction of the Greens was critical of the movement's growing tendency towards Marxism-Leninism and the strident anti-Americanism.

To apparently prevent the development of a leadership cult, the Green's Bundestag faction removed Petra Kelly from the party's parliamentary leadership. Her marginalisation from the world stage had begun. She remained unmarried, choosing to sponsor a Tibetan orphan girl who stays in Dharmashala. ■

(Courtesy: *The Pioneer*)

Communal Prejudice behind Communalism

UROOJ ABDI and M.G. HUSSAIN

Since independence various parts of the country have witnessed the occurrences of communal riots. The riots have not only taken numerous innocent lives, damaged national properties but also have brought a bad name to the country. Such ugly acts of violence remain a threat to national integration and to international relations. It is but natural that politicians as well as scientists have been trying to identify the causes of communal riots and to suggest ways and means to control them. Though politicians and social scientists are working along different lines, they atleast agree on one contributory factor, that is, communal prejudice.

Indian population consists of several religious groups, Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, Jains and other religions but communalism in India is mainly limited between the two religious groups, namely, Hindus and Muslims. These two communities have many stereotypes and prejudices against each other. This results in disharmony, hatred, dislike, schism and separatism. Such prejudices towards each other sometimes result in communal riots that have caused destruction to life and property on a large scale. Even if it is correct to claim that the medieval period of India was free from communalism in the relations between the Hindus and Muslims and it was fostered by the Britishers, it remains a fact that there always existed a gulf of prejudiced attitudes between Hindus and Muslims, and this is what the Britishers exploited and thereby put the two communities against each other. During the British rule, particularly towards the beginning of the twentieth century, the cleavage between the Hindus and Muslims became much more apparent and wider. In 1906 the Muslim League was formed to safeguard and advance the political rights and interests of the Indian Muslims. The Muslim community, by and large, remained alienated from the mainstream of the Indian National Congress and rallied round the Muslim League because of their prejudiced outlook and narrow-mindedness and also partly because of their reaction against the Hindu revivalist movement, Hindu millitant nationalism of some political leaders and their religious dogmatism. Consequently, the gulf between these two major communities was further widened.

Prejudice is defined as "a composite of stereotypes, myths, and legends in which a group label or symbol is used to classify, characterise and define an individual or group considered as totality" (*Kimbalyoung*, 1948). According to Ackerman and Jahoda (1950), "Prejudice is a pattern of hostility in interpersonal relations which is directed against an entire group, or against its individual members; it fulfills a specific irrational function for its bearer".

An operational meaning of prejudice has been given in Webster's *New Twentieth Century Dictionary* (1965) which can be summarised as "a sort of prior unfavourable judgement or opinion of the members of a race or the occupation of any social role held in disregard of facts that contradict it". After a very careful examination of the writings on prejudice, Harding, Kutner and Chein (1969) have advanced a definition of prejudice.

According to them, prejudice is a "failure of rationality or a failure of justice or a failure of human heartedness in an individual's attitude toward members of another ethnic group". A careful perusal of various explanations of prejudice reveals the fact that prejudices are a widely held complex phenomena which are gathered in the course of life, are multi-causally determined and are functional in character for the individual.

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NUMEROUS theories have been advanced to provide positive explanations of prejudice. However, following Ashmore (1970), the different theoretical explanations of prejudice may be classified into two categories on the basis of their level of analysis—societal and individual levels. As far as the analysis at the societal level is concerned, there are two theories about the origin of prejudice: (a) the theory of economic exploitation and (b) realistic group conflict theory. Prejudices against the minority groups are produced by the majority group. This exploitation in turn enhances conflict between the two groups. As a matter of fact, economic competition is one of the chief sources of inter-group conflict. In our social and economic set-up, the attitude of the dominant group toward the subordinate one has usually been friendly so long as the system of economic relations was not challenged, but the attitudes turn hostile whenever the subordinate group attempts to improve its own position. The realistic group conflict theory, on the other hand, advocates the importance of actual or per-

The authors belong to the Department of Psychology, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi.

ceived nature of inter-group relations in the development of prejudice.

It has generally been observed that whenever the members of one group looked upon the members of the other group with distrust and hostility, inter-group conlict originates. Prejudice in the present-day Indian situation was intensified into conflicts between Hindus and Muslims during the partition of the country. In his book, *Prejudice in Indian Youth: A Socio-psychological Study* (1981) Hassan discussed sociological and personality correlates of prejudice. Among the sociological factors, religion, education, social class, occupation, ncome and parental influence are some of the imporant causative agents of prejudice. Frustration, aggresion, anxiety, rigidity, security, insecurity and inolerance of ambiguity of the major personality correates of prejudice which are frequently researched and discussed.

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A large number of studies have investigated the inluence of religious affiliation on the development of prejudice. The findings of these studies are inconsistent. For instance, Merton (1940), Allport and Kramer 1946), Bettelheim and Janowitz (1950), Stoufer (1955), Goldsen (1960), Lenski (1961), Kilpatrick, *et al.* (1970), have reported that Catholics were most hostile toward he Negroes; Protestants were the next most prejudiced gainst the Jews and those with no religious affiliation were the least prejudiced. However, Mackenzie (1948), Rosenblith (1949), Adorno (1950), Campbell (1947) nd Harlar (1942) have reported little or no differences etween Catholics and Protestants with regard to the xtent of prejudice towards the Jews.

More or less similar conflicting results were obtained by Indian researchers. Thus one group of researchers such as Adinarayan (1953), Chaudhary 1958), Hassan (1975-78) and Singh (1980) have observed that Muslims are more prejudiced than Hindus. The other group of researchers, on the other hand, ailed to confirm this observation (for example Natraj 1962), Sarkar and Hassan (1973), and Chatterjee *et al.* 1967)

sycho-social and Personality Correlates of Prejudice

There have been very few studies on the relative influence of the social-psychological correlates of rejudice. However, in their study of riots, Chatterjee *et al* 1967) observed that the deeply rooted psychological factors and particular social climate were the most important auses for the communal conflicts. There is, however, one Indian research which makes a comparative evaluation of sychological and sociological correlates of prejudice Singh and Hassan, 1976). Many studies have demonstrated that highly prejudiced individuals have a greater tendency to displace hostility than unprejudiced individuals, and prejudiced individuals are more susceptible to frustration (Raper, 1933, Houland and Sears, 1940, Cantril, 1941, Pettigrew and Cramer, 1959). On the other hand, Wright (1945), Cohen and Murphy (1966) have reported that displaced aggravation plays a very important role in the growth of prejudice. Further supporting evidence that prejudiced individuals tend to show greater hostility after frustration, were provided by Berkowitz (1961), Weatherby (1961), and Berkowitz and Green (1962).

In a study Lindzey (1950) selected 10 prejudiced and 10 non-prejudiced subjects and subjected them to frustration. He found the prejudiced subjects more frustrated than the non-prejudiced subjects. In the extent of increasing tension and social conflicts all over the world, it has become increasingly necessary to investigate into the personality organisation of the individual which helps in the development of prejudice in them. Allport (1954) observes: "A person acts with prejudice in the first instance because he perceives it in a certain way. But he perceives it in a certain way partly because his personality is what it is." His view suggests that personality variables may contribute significantly in the development of prejudice. The studies mentioned above would not only provide us useful information about communal prejudices but would also help us to suggest certain conditions by which communal prejudices may be reduced, if not wholly eliminated. As a matter of fact, communal prejudices are not only an obstacle in the advancement of the nation but also remain a threat to national integration. ■

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Sixteen years of Left Front Government

JYOTI BASU

Chief Minister of West Bengal

The people of West Bengal are electing us for sixteen years. In panchayat and municipalities, the Left Front has been elected. In a feudal-capitalist set-up, the people are electing a people-oriented government. With an unfriendly Central government in the background, we have been working most of these years. To deliver more goods we are demanding restructuring of Centre-State relations giving the States more powers.

We have never promised the people anything unattainable. Our duty is to serve them assiduously. The panchayats have been working all these years. Elections are regularly held. Democracy has spread its tentacles. Land reform has been done successfully. West Bengal is an example of its own kind in the whole of India. We are always getting support from the majority of the people. Yet there is no reason for complacence. Because we have only limited power and thus we cannot satisfy all. So we have to tell the people about the difficulties. We have to be polite. No obstinacy with the people. With patience we must be with the people always. We have to listen to what the people have to say.

What is necessary is to educate the people and make them socially conscious. People would learn from their own experience about who is a friend and who is an enemy, who is right and who is wrong. The Left Front would perform its duties, taking the people with it. Similarly, it is the Left forces which would have to play the most important role in fighting the dangers threatening the sovereignty of the country, self-reliance, unity, integrity and communal amity. ■

Different languages,
different wears,
different views - in diversity
lies the greatness of unity.

Government of West Bengal

Rural Development : West Bengal Experience

SURYA KANTA MISHRA

Within the overall national policy perspective of overcentralisation and growth devoid of distribution, West Bengal rural developmental efforts present an alternative approach of growth based on distribution of basic asset that is,land and decentralisation through Panchayats. If the former approach has landed the country in everdeepening crisis, with its overall industrial and food grains production falling by 0.8 per cent and 1.5 per cent respectively (in 1991-92), the later approach could place West Bengal in the first position among all the States in the rate of growth of food grains production in the Seventh Plan period (34 per cent) with over-10 per cent growth rate in 1991-92.

West Bengal continues to occupy the first position in rice, jute and fish production, second position in potato and egg production and third position in broiler chicken production. The index for industrial production in the State in 1991-92 has increased by 1.1 per cent inspite of discriminatory attitude of the Centre and the estimated increase in SDP and per capita SDP for West Bengal at constant prices in the same year will also be double the rate of growth of GNP and per capita GNP at the national level. The fiasco of the national policy of growth with trickle down effect was evident from the increase in rural poverty (45.2 per cent in 1967-68 to 50.5 per cent in 1972-73) and malnutrition (26 per cent in 1969 to 30 per cent in 1971) during the peak period of Green Revolution. On the other hand, when the Left Front ministry assumed the office in 1977 the percentages of people below poverty line in West Bengal, both rural (58.3) and combined (52.2) were higher than the corresponding figures for the country as a whole (51.2 and 48.3 respectively), where as the provisional figures for 1987-88 (30.3 and 27.6 for West Bengal) are not only less than the all India figures (33.4 and 29.9), but also the percentage decline of poverty in West Bengal during this period, both rural and combined(-28.8 and -24.6 per cent respectively) is more than all India decline(-17.8% and -18.4 per cent) in the same period. West Bengal stands only second to Kerala among all the States and Union Territories in this regard.

Micro level studies conducted by Sunil Sengupta in collaboration with Amartya Sen in 1987-88 indicate that rural children in West Bengal no longer suffer from what is termed as 'severe' or 'disastrous' malnutrition as per UNICEF standard weight for age chart. Other grades of malnutrition taken together was found to be on decline and not a single house hold skipped the staple food of cereals for a single day even during lean periods. A comparison of thirtyeighth and fortyfifth round NSS data also reveals that West Bengal stands first in the country as a whole in terms of the rate of increase of per person cereal consumption, when the quantity of cereal consumption per person per 30 days for the country as a whole has fallen from 14.80 Kg in 1982-83 to 14 Kg in 1989-90 (14.28 to 15.44 Kg for West Bengal). As increased production in agriculture and allied sectors along with the better purchasing power for the rural poor was accompanied by a related growth of cottage and small scale industries linked with the primary sector and those producing mass consumption good, for example handlooms. It is not, therefore, surprising that West Bengal has the highest number of small scale units in the country now and the production of handloom industry has more than doubled from 200 million meters in 1976-77 to 443 million meters in 1991-92.

Bullocks put before the Cart

The impressive growth in different sectors of rural development in West Bengal owes its origin to land reform. This State having only 3.58 per cent of the country's cultivable land contributes 20.77 per cent of the total ceiling surplus land distributed in the entire country. Over 56 per cent of the vested land allottees in the State belong to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes comprising only 26 per cent of West Bengal population. As per NSS data nearly 60 per cent of the total agricultural land has come to be owned by the small and marginal farmers (as against corresponding national figure of 29 per cent only) and adding the land recorded under cultivation of sharecropper this may exceed 75 per cent. Micro level survey conducted in the district of Midnapore in collaboration with the Rural Development Centre, IIT, Kharagpur had almost similar findings. Agricultural

Dr Surya Kanta Mishra is the Minister-in-Charge, Panchayat and Rural Development, the Government of West Bengal.

farm census data had already established that smaller working peasants with their limited holdings did exhibit superior production performance. It is more so in West Bengal because of a relatively better delivery system of non-land inputs which was to follow redistributive land reforms in the State. This was how the *bullock* of distribution was put before the *cart* of growth to keep in moving forward with a faster pace. One can safely conclude that, in the national plane the policy approach continues to be one of putting the cart before the bullocks.

The Instruments of Decentralisation

It would have been impossible to talk of expansion of democracy to the 'grassroot' level without having the three tier Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) in the State. Here again, West Bengal is the only State in the country where panchayat elections had been held regularly at five years intervals for three consecutive terms in last one and a half decade. West Bengal presents a sharp contrast in another sphere—the class and social composition of its panchayat members, more than 70 per cent of whom belong to the category of small and marginal farmers. This pro-poor composition of the panchayats continues to be preserved in successive elections as confirmed by several studies. The SC and ST representation is roughly in conformity with their proportion to the entire populace with a rising trend in successive elections though there was no provision for reservation till the latest amendment to West Bengal Panchayat Act was passed in the last session of the Assembly. Percentage of women members, which however continues to remain unsatisfactory (around 10 per cent including nominated members) will exceed one third of the total after the election due next year is over. The class and social composition of PRIs is bound to have important bearing on the quality of implementation of antipoverty programmes. The results of concurrent evaluation reveals that 100 per cent of the beneficiaries were selected by Gram Panchayats in West Bengal as against 59 per cent in India as a whole. The ineligible beneficiaries (family income more than Rs 6400 per annum) financed under IRDP were two per cent in West Bengal as against five per cent in the country. The quality of the assets was good in 91.7 per cent of cases in the State (81 per cent in India); assets were found intact in 97 per cent (All India 72 per cent) assistant was sufficient in 99 per cent (India 81 per cent); income from asset was more than Rs 1000 per annum in 80 per cent (India 51 per cent); difference between cost and asset value was more than Rs 500 only in three per cent (India 18 per cent) and the beneficiaries had to pay more than Rs 100 for going to block, bank and market in only one per cent (India 11 per cent) of cases. The effort for decentralisation through PRIs in West Bengal acquired a new dimension with the formation of District and Block Planning Committees (DPC and BPC) headed by the chair-persons of Zilla Parishad and Panchayat Samitis respectively. The devisible outlay meant for the districts has registered steady growth since then and has reached nearly 50 per cent of the approved State Plan outlay by now. The initiatives unleashed through PRIs in a scale hitherto unseen have come to explore ever newer horizons of people participation. West Bengal has come out as the biggest contingent of literacy and health movement in the country with over one million volunteers engaged in the total literacy drive without any remuneration whatsoever. It may be recalled that West Bengal became the first State in the country to receive NOMA prize of UNESCO for literacy performance last year.

Experience Summed Up

The foregoing account of achievements should not lead to complacency. There is ample scope of self criticism and need for improvement in many areas. The Left Front Ministry has been functioning in a State when the country to which this State belongs is ruled in the interest of concentrating land in agriculture and capital in industry in fewer hands, be it Indian or foreign. This ministry has limited financial powers but no political power (that is state power) in the truest sense of it. The Centre-State relation is getting skewed in favour of the Centre everyday. In spite of such basic limitations, the West Bengal experience offers a valuable lesson to be learnt. There cannot be any sustained growth with distribution and therefore development must start with land reform. There cannot be any expansion of democracy in the rural areas without decentralisation through PRIs and the efficacy of the PRIs depend upon their class and social composition which is again determined by the degree of success in land reforms. Finally, whether land reform or panchayat it all depends upon the political will. That the Left Front Ministry in West Bengal has the political will and that the will could be translated into action, is vindicated by the political stability it enjoys for the last fifteen years, something unparalleled in the country. ■

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Decentralisation in Planning in West Bengal

Decentralisation in planning means devolution of powers of decision-making in formulation as well as implementation of the Plan schemes down to the level of districts and further below, with corresponding financial provisions and involvement of the local common people through the elected Panchayats and similar local bodies

In any discussion on the decentralisation of planning with involvement of people through the Panchayats, the following issues have to be discussed:

(a) priorities of planning including land reforms, (b) organisational set-up at the district level and below indicating the role of the Panchayats and other elected bodies vis-a-vis the official administration, (c) financial provision, (d) formulation of plans, (e) implementation and monitoring of Plan schemes, (f) public accountability and (g) new extensions.

Priorities of Planning:

In West Bengal, the Left Front Government has in its approach to development planning, chosen the priorities which are in the interest of the common people. It has begun with redistributive land reforms in agriculture. With the implementation of land reforms, according to the National Sample Survey data, nearly 60 per cent of the total land has come to be owned by the small and marginal farmers against the national figure of 28.8 per cent as owned by the small and marginal farmers.

When the priorities of planning are thus placed in every sector in favour of the common people, particularly beginning with land reforms, an objective condition is created for involvement of the common people in the process of planning. The Panchayat elections, which had been stalled in this State for about 15 years, were held in 1978 after the Left Front government came into power. These elections were then held with regularity of five years in 1983 and then again recently in 1988.

Plan priorities in favour of the common people, including the emphasis on land reforms, regular holding of the Panchayat elections and the pro-poor class character of the Panchayats – these characteristics taken together have created preconditions where the common people have reasons to be involved in the entire process of planning through the Panchayats.

Organisational set-up for District and Block-level Planning

In each district, about five years back, the District Planning Committee (DPC) was set up with the Zilla Parishad Sabhachipati as its Chairman and the District Magistrate as its Member-Secretary. The other members are, on the one hand, the Heads of the Standing Committees of the Zilla Parishad, the Sabhapatis of all the (Block-level) Panchayat Samities, and the Chairman of municipalities of the district and, on the other hand, the District-level officers of all the departments and the representatives of the Statutory Authorities in the district. The necessary technical and administrative support is provided to the District Planning Committee. The sub-divisional officers are invitees to the District Planning Committee. This District Planning Committee is regarded as the real executive arm of a slightly bigger general body called the District Planning and Co-ordination Council (DPCC) which has all the members of DPC plus the Minster(s) hailing from the district, MPs and MLAs of the district. This DPCC has the minister hailing from the district as its Chairman (on rotation if there are several ministers), the Zilla Parishad Sabhadhipati as its Vice-Chairman and the District Magistrate as its Member-Secretary.

The DPCC is a general body, meeting twice or so in a year, while the DPC, the executive arm of DPCC, keeps on meeting frequently and regularly. Similarly, at the level of each block within the district, a Block Planning Committee (BPC) has been set up with the concerned Panchayat Samiti Sabhapati as its Chairman and the Block Development Officer as its Member-Secretary. The other members are, on the one hand, the Heads of the Standing Committees of the Panchayat Samiti and the Pradhans of all the Gram Panchayats within the block and, on the other h and, the block-level officers of all the departments as its members. The necessary technical and administrative support is again provided to this BPC. It may be noted that through this composition of the District and Block Planning set-up the relationship between the Panchayats and the all other departments and agencies in the districts has been well defined. Defined also is the relationship between the Panchayats and the municipalities, that between the Zilla Parishad Sabhadhipati and the District Magistrate and also that between the Panchayats members and other elected representatives.

Financial Provision

Given the over-all priorities of planning and decentralised organisational set-up mentioned above, the Plan budget of each of the concerned departments of the State government has been divided into two parts – one relating to the

WEST BENGAL AT A GLANCE

Area	..	87.853 sq.kms.	Number of C.D. Blocks	..	341
Population (Total)	..	54,580,647	Number of Mouzas	..	41,392
Population (Urban)	..	14,446,721	Number of Gram Panchayats	..	3,304
Population (Rural)	..	40,133,926	Number of Towns	..	291
Population (S.C.)	..	12,000,768	Number of Municipalities	..	111
Population (S.T.)	..	3,070,672	Rate of Literacy	..	40.88%
Number of districts	..	17	Rate of Literacy(Male)	..	50.49%
Number of Subdivisions	..	51	Rate of Literacy(Female)	..	30.33%
			Total Forest Area	..	1,186,000 hectares.

State-level schemes and the other relating to the District (or below) level schemes. The general criterion adopted is as follows:

If the scheme has a command area encompassing districts more than one, then it can not be settled at the level of any one district and it may be regarded as a State-level scheme. But, if the scheme has a command area restricted within the district, it will be regarded as a District-level scheme. Similarly, within a district, if a scheme has an overlapping more than one blocks it will be a District-level scheme. But, again, if the scheme, in terms of command area, is restricted within a block, it will be regarded as a Block-level scheme. To give one illustration relating to road schemes, a State Highway running through the districts is a State-level scheme, whereas a district road within a district but covering several blocks is a District-level scheme, and a village road starting and ending within a block is a Block-level scheme.

Funds to be allotted in a certain financial year under District (and below)-level schemes of each department are provisionally communicated to the District Planning Committee (DPC) of each district well in advance.

In addition, there is a special united fund given to each district by the State government, called the "District Plan Fund" which is used by the District Planning Committee (DPC) for filling up critical gaps in certain sectors which may remain even after pulling the resources of all the departments.

Formulation of Plans

The District Planning Committee (DPC), holds its meeting in which, as members of the DPC, the Panchayat chiefs from the blocks (Panchayat Samiti Sabhapatis) are also present.In this meeting, keeping in view the pro-poor priorities as assessed by the DPC in the specific context of the district, a decision is taken for dividing allotted funds for the district between the District-level schemes and the Block-level schemes for each department, and further dividing the allocation of the Block-level schemes (department-wise) among the blocks on the basis of objective criteria.

Given the felt needs and the physical condition of the Block, the Block Planning Committee then formulates a comprehensive Block Plan for each sector by combining and coordinating the funds available from the different departments and in relation to special programmes. For each sector, the plan will be formulated, indicating the schemes, the physical targets (broke-down to quarters of a financial year) and sources of funds – all in the framework of a two-way Table.

In this way a comprehensive Block Plan, covering each sector, is formulated and approved by the BPC. All these Block Plus as well as plans prepared by the municipalities for the concerned urban areas are then brought together and placed before the District Planning Committee(DPC). The DPC cannot alter a Block Plan, once approved by the BPC, except when there is a gross violation of priorities or a problematic overlap with another block or municipality.

To this Block Plans, and Municipality Plans, the DPC then adds, after discussions and analysis, the District-level schemes in every sector, that is, schemes with command areas covering several blocks or blocks as well as municipalities. In this formulation the DPC will also combine funds from different sources. This sum total of Block Plans, Municipality Plans and District-level schemes constitutes the District Plan, and its is then placed before the general body of District Planning and Coordination Council (DPCC) for final approval. After approval by the concerned DPCCs, the District Plans of all the districts are presented before the State Planning Board. In the discussions at the State Planning Board, there is also State-level representation from each of the concerned departments. The State Planning Board will not ordinarily alter the District Plans, once these are approved by DPCCs, except when there is a gross violation of priorities or a scheme of a district has a problematic overlap with another district. After discussions at the State Planning Board, the District Plans become an integral part of the State Plan. The remaining part of the State Plan is constituted by the State-level schemes of the different departments which are settled after discussions again with the State Planning Board.

Implementation of the Plan Schemes

In these jobs, the Panchayats are provided with technical and administrative staff support. For certain categories of staff, this support is sometimes provided on the basis of deputation from the concerned departments. The entire establishment cost on this account is borne by the State government. For executing these responsibilities, the Panchayats are prevented in this State from using any contractor. They involve the local people directly with technical assistance by the staff and voluntary supervision by the Panchayat representatives.

Monitoring of Plan Implementation

Once the implementational responsibility is fixed with physical targets (quarter-wise) and provision of funds, powers of monitoring have been entrusted, alongwith the implementing agency, also with the Block Planning Committees and the District Planning Committees, depending on whether the schemes are Block-level or District-level schemes. The importance of this extra monitoring by the BPC and the DPC is that this is a collective exercise in which the representatives of the implementing agency are also participating. This monitoring can be conducted quarter-wise and the results of monitoring from each district can then the reviewed at the State-level. The subsequent release of funds can be tied up with the findings of the review, with a built-in incentive for higher release of funds depending on the achievement of targets.

Public Accountability

The ultimate accountability of this decentralised planning exercise is to the people. There is first of all a regular arrangement for auditing of all expenditures incurred by the Panchayats. But, in addition, there is a direct mandatory procedure of accountability to the people. To this end, at least two public meetings are mandatory on the part of each Gram Panchayat – one to discuss with the general people the selection of schemes and the other for presentation of accounts of expenditure. It is insisted that these accounts should be shown in a public place. In addition to this display of the written accounts, verbal direct communication to the common people in an open meeting is also considered essential. These are the ultimate democratic checks on the entire system. ■

V.N. NARAYANAN : BE INDIAN

(Continued from page 3)

nothing at all for the innocent citizens. Their group interest is not served by taking up the cause of innocent victims.

Compare them with Sant Longowal who declared that every Hindu killed by militancy in Punjab reminded him of Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom. Compare them with Surjit Singh Barnala who held an Akhand Path for the Lalru bus massacre victims. The Hind Samachar group has a fund to rehabilitate the families—both Sikh and Hindu—of victims of terrorist violence, but neither the Akalis nor the SGPC ever even thought of having such a fund for Sikh victims of police and militant violence.

Look at the attitude of the powers that be in Delhi. Their group interest demands that the perpetrators of the most heinous communal massacre in Indian history since independence should not be proceeded against. Eight years after the savagery of November 1984, the effort is still to subject the judicial process to cynical delay. Judgement had long ago been delivered on the October 31 outrage but the lives of over 3000 citizens taken by brute force cannot stand judicial scrutiny. Incidentally, the victims of the Bhopal gas genocide are still awaiting crumbs of relief. The Bahugunas, the Medha Patkars, environment group and even the L.C. Jains and Nanaji Deshmukhs are at the periphery of India shouting about the people who don't matter. Gilbert's "somebody in particular" matters, but the demos do not. From the Vedic "*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*" (the whole world is one family) India has traversed in less than four decades to the post-historic "*Kutumbaiva Vasudha*" (My family is the whole world). The late comrade Ram Piara of Karnal put it in one sentence; "In our country we want Bhagat Singhs to be born—in our neighbours' houses".

Indian nationhood suffered its most grievous blow in 1947 when we allowed India to be divided on the basis of religion. Then a few thousand people joined together and called themselves "We, the People" and granted to the emerging nation a Constitution which emphasised "unity in diversity". Over the years the people of the country progressively atomised their identities even as successive governments moved away from the people. The apogee is reached in the present with the government looking almost wholly towards Washington and hardly at its own people.

In the past three days I have read and re-read the *Business Today* interview of Harshad Mehta and I think he has put his finger on the problem. He says, and he must know, that 80 per cent of business (in the financial and share markets) is illegal and they are not touched. He also says his total business dealing is less than the amounts raised by the smallest mutual fund. The question is: Who manipulates the market? The inference is obvious—the plethora of government institutions, banks and public agencies. If 10,000 persons are individually engaged in Rs 10 crore frauds, it is within the system and no one bothers; but if one man accounts for Rs 1000 crores, the rest gets jealous and pounces on him. One scamster is a fraud; 100 scamsters make a government.

Harshad Mehta concludes his interview with the remark that the governments is making so much noise about the $ 1 billion (Rs 3000 crores) scam, but during his 100 days in jail he was thinking about "India's $ 72 billion (Rs 2,26,000 crores) foreign debt and how to liquidate it". The moral of the story is: when in jail, think of India. Out of it think of yourself and the money you can make. ■

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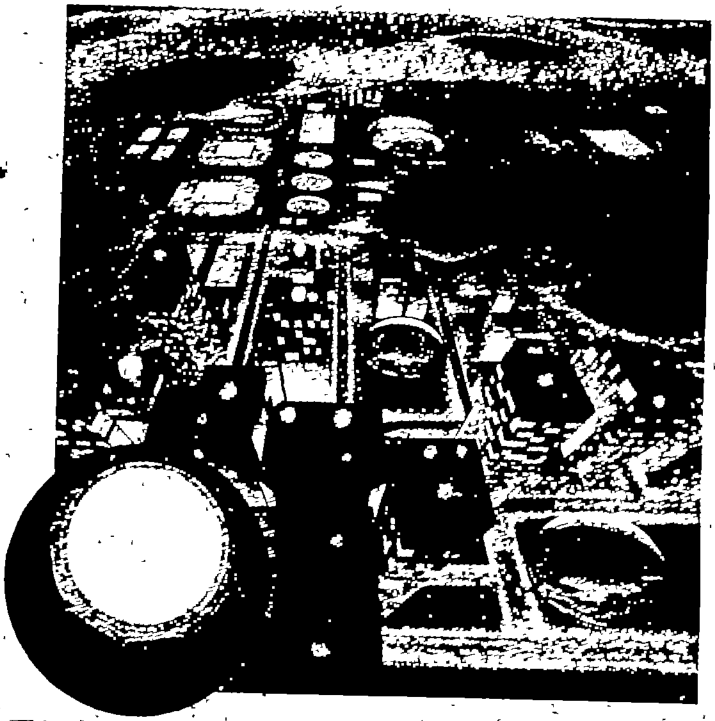

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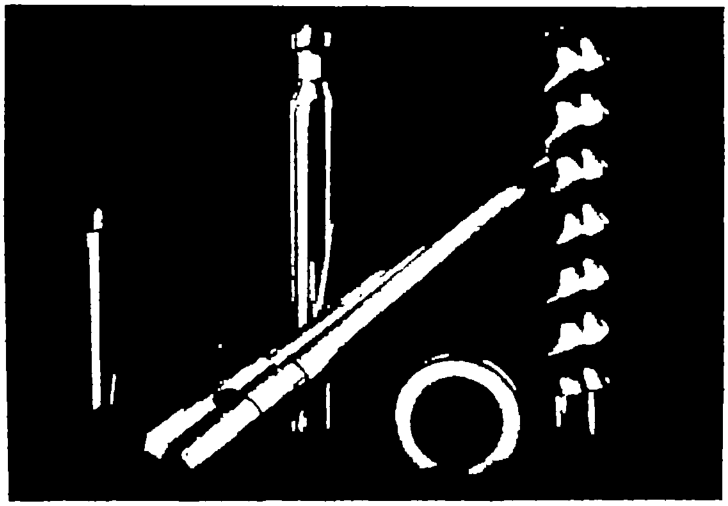

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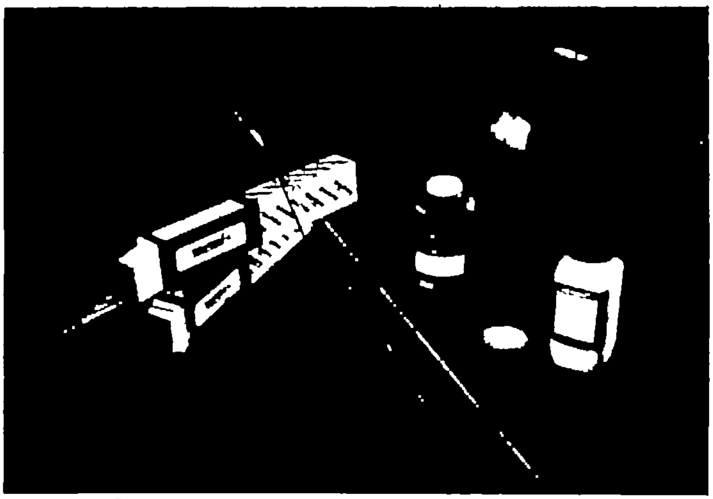

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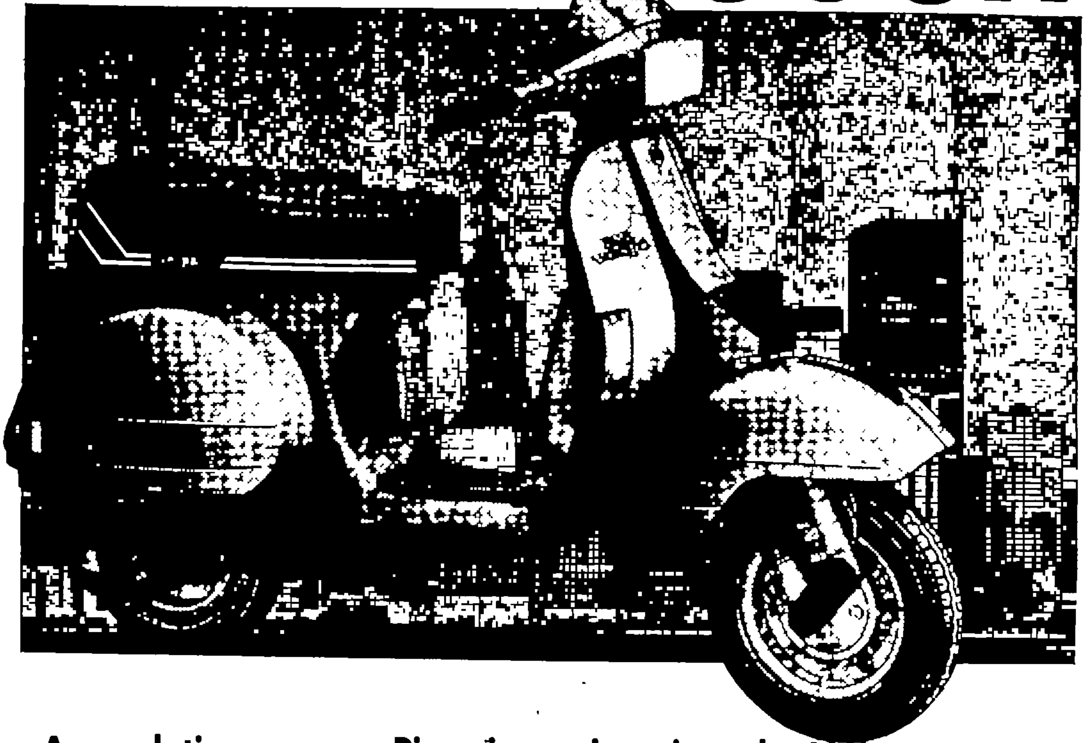

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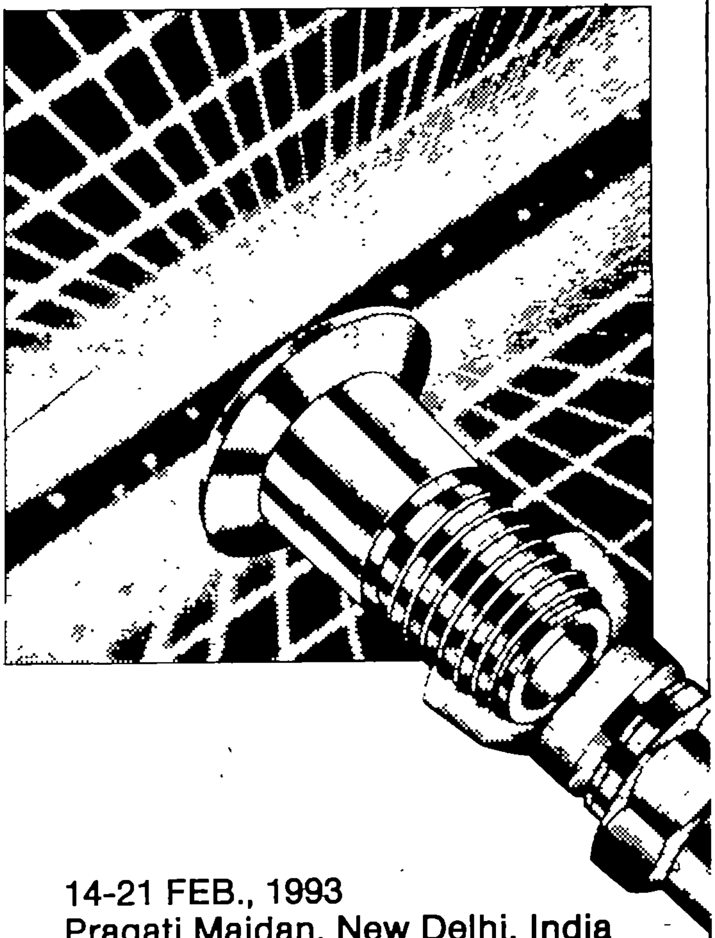

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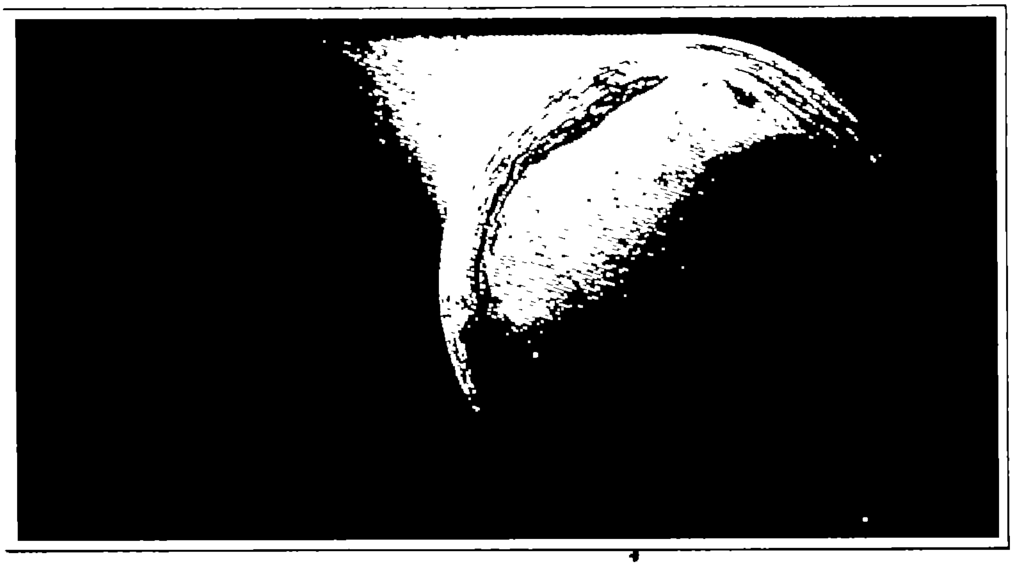

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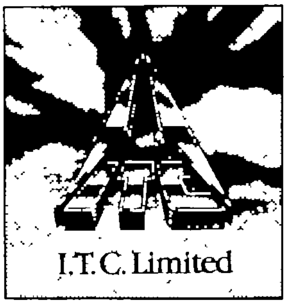

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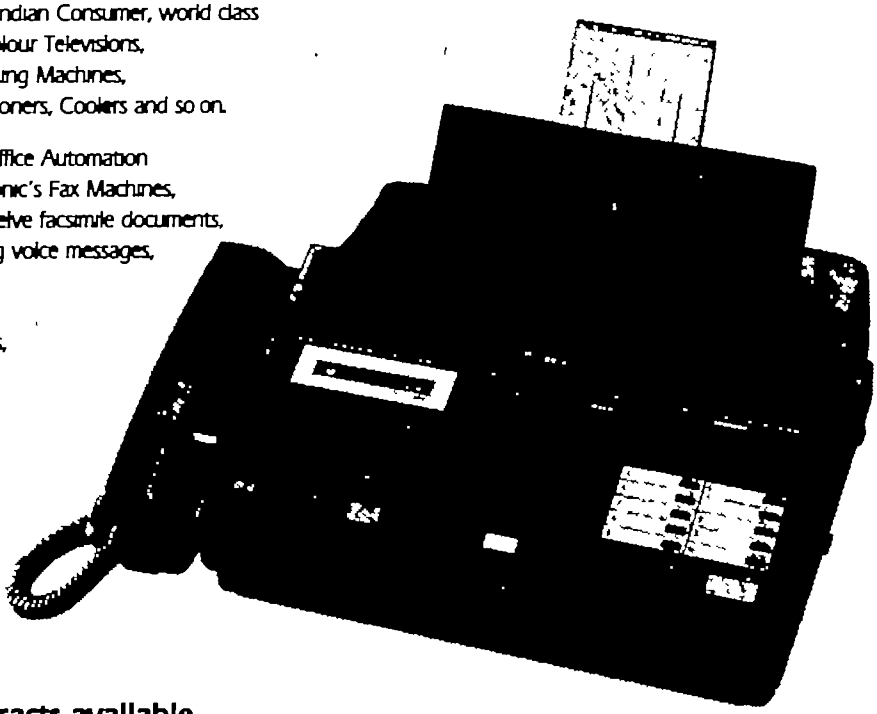

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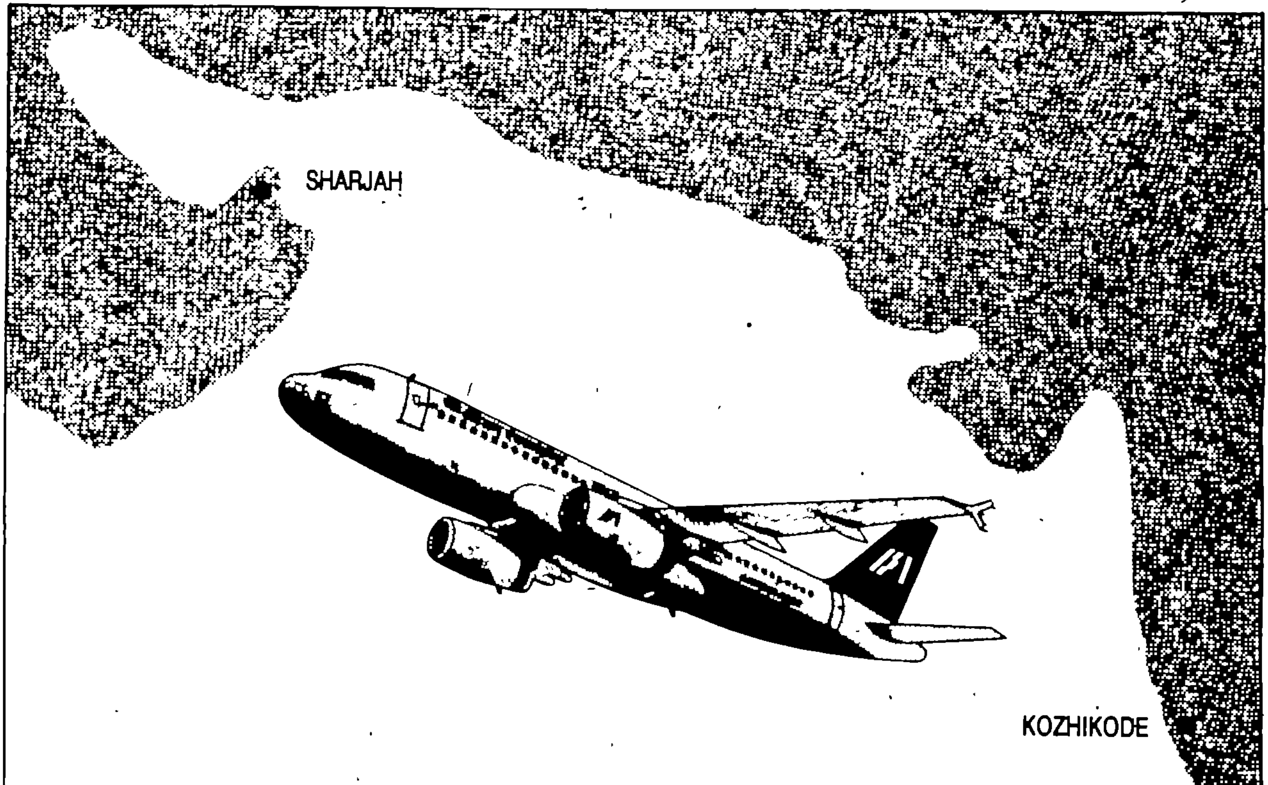

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Readers, Please Note . . .

This Annual Number being more than four times the size of an ordinary number, the next issue of Mainstream *will appear on December 12, 1992.* — Editor

Mainstream

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FROM THE EDITORIAL DESK

Vista of Hope

Thirty eventful years span a full generation.

These thirty years have seen three wars on our territory; several change of guards at the Centre and in the States; the death of two Prime Ministers in harness and the assassination of two of their successors; mounting tensions and turmoil in different parts of the country on account of a host of political, economic, social factors. The spurt in secessionist-terrorist activities actively abetted from across the border, the growing assertion of regional and ethnic identities alongside increasing exposure of class, caste and gender-based inequalities, the progressive degeneration of the polity through the nexus between politics on the one hand and money and muscle power on the other, as also the advent of yuppie culture among politicians of different hues, the phenomenal influence of black money on the national scene, and the marked rise in fissiparous tendencies characterised by sectarian communalism and religious fundamentalism—all these have been responsible for the gradual weakening of the democratic ethos of this nation, the mainspring of its vitality.

However, these thirty years have also been witness to numerous achievements registered by the people of this great country. As the indigenous efforts to build a durable industrial, scientific and technological base have recorded spectacular successes the information explosion and scientific technological revolution have been accompanied by a striking heightening of human consciousness across this vast landmass of India that is Bharat. No doubt this cannot obliterate the phenomena of obscurantist practices and medieval rituals surviving to this day as we approach the end of the twentieth century. And yet the impact of this burgeoning consciousness is being felt far and wide in the progress of mass struggles of the teeming millions in our countryside where dedicated bands of workers outside the pale of established parties are playing an enhanced role in mobilising the people for socio-economic transformation at the grassroots. Even if the entrenched vested interests in the rural areas have not been dislodged from the vantage positions they continue to occupy, the growing awareness of their rights among members of the weakest segments of our society has already provided sufficient testimony of radical changes in the not-too-distant future.

If the rich continue to display vulgar opulence and thereby seek to widen the chasm between the haves and have-nots, their clout is not all that powerful today when faced with the organised might of the poor. This has been testified on more than one occasion even if there is little room to doubt the pernicious impact of wealth on our society as a whole.

These thirty years have seen breathtaking changes on the global plane. The burial of the Cold War has not automatically resulted in the abandonment of Cold War mindsets. And yet the fact is that those who had forecast the "end of history" following the downfall of regimented societies that had misappropriated the ideology of 'communism', have been forced to beat a reluctant retreat. The protagonists of establishment of a "new world order" fashioned through the Bush fire in the Persian Gulf now stand bewildered in the wake of the stunning defeat the US President suffered in the just-concluded historic election which gave an unequivocal mandate for change. The Bush Administration's myopia that led it to claim "global victory" in the Cold War and subsequently initiate feverish moves for ensuring unipolar hegemony is in a large measure to be blamed for its present plight.

The humiliation of George Bush in the US Presidential poll is in effect a defeat for the psychology of arrogance of power based on military might that had come to characterise his Presidency. It was this arrogance of power which was responsible for making him blind to the bitter reality of the shattered American dream for the ordinary US citizen grappling with the economic crisis and socio-political-ecological hazards which are lately scaling extraordinary heights. Herein lies the significance of the generational change in the White House. This is not the "end of history" as the pundits had predicted in a hasty interpretation of the demise of the statist 'socialist' experiment but in fact the inauguration of a new era wherein the historical processes would not only retain their validity but in fact gain increased legitimacy in the days ahead.

This new scenario in the international sphere demands new thinking in all its implications. The dialectics of the changing world cannot be understood in isolation. The process must be viewed in its entirety. Failure to undertake such a task can only make one a prisoner of subjectivism.

As far as the developing states are concerned, their future is undoubtedly beset with formidable challenges. These basically spring from the obvious infirmities afflicting these countries. These are intensified as a result of the all-pervasive poverty and destitution, the relentless assaults on the purchasing power of the common man and the constant threat of falling into the debt trap laid by the multilateral financial institutions and international lending agencies. In the sombre backdrop of such prospects our country has to summon all its strength and courage to meet the situation that confronts it and incessantly strive for self-reliant progress foiling dubious attempts by the powers that be to mortgage our sovereignty.

Nevertheless, the latest global developments—the consequences of the severe blow to the temperament associated with the concept of a "new world order" as well as arrogance of power exhibited in abundance by the world's sole superpower, donning the mantle of a global policeman—offers a silver lining whose importance for the developing world including India can barely be minimised. As it observes its thirtieth anniversary *Mainstream* is thus reinvigorated with an element of hope that promises to sustain it in its arduous and difficult battle for realising a society free of ignorance, want and deprivation—the essential precondition for unfettered advance towards a higher stage in human civilisation.

November 7 *S.C.*

राष्ट्रपति
भारत गणतंत्र
PRESIDENT
REPUBLIC OF INDIA

MESSAGE

The completion of thirty years of publication of "Mainstream" is an important milestone for this Weekly on Current Affairs which has made a distinct place for itself in the field of constructive journalism. I wish "Mainstream" the very best in the service of the country in the years to come.

S. D. Sharma
(SHANKER DAYAL SHARMA)

New Delhi,

November 4, 1992.

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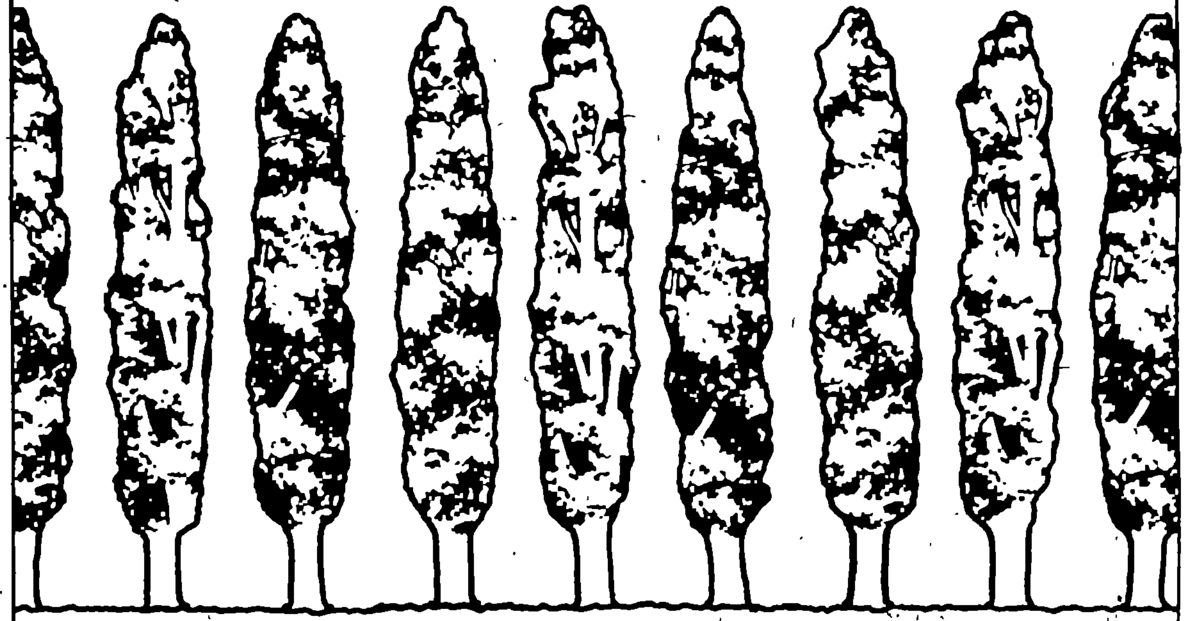

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PRIME MINISTER

MESSAGE

I am happy to learn that **Mainstream** is celebrating its 30th anniversary. Through the years Mainstream has maintained its stature as a serious publication for the discriminating reader. It has avoided the lure of sensationalism and concentrated on in-depth studies of high academic standard whose validity and reason have endured. The success of such scholarship in journalism is a tribute as much to the maturity of the Indian reader as to the intellectual integrity of the small and dedicated band of writers who have made this possible.

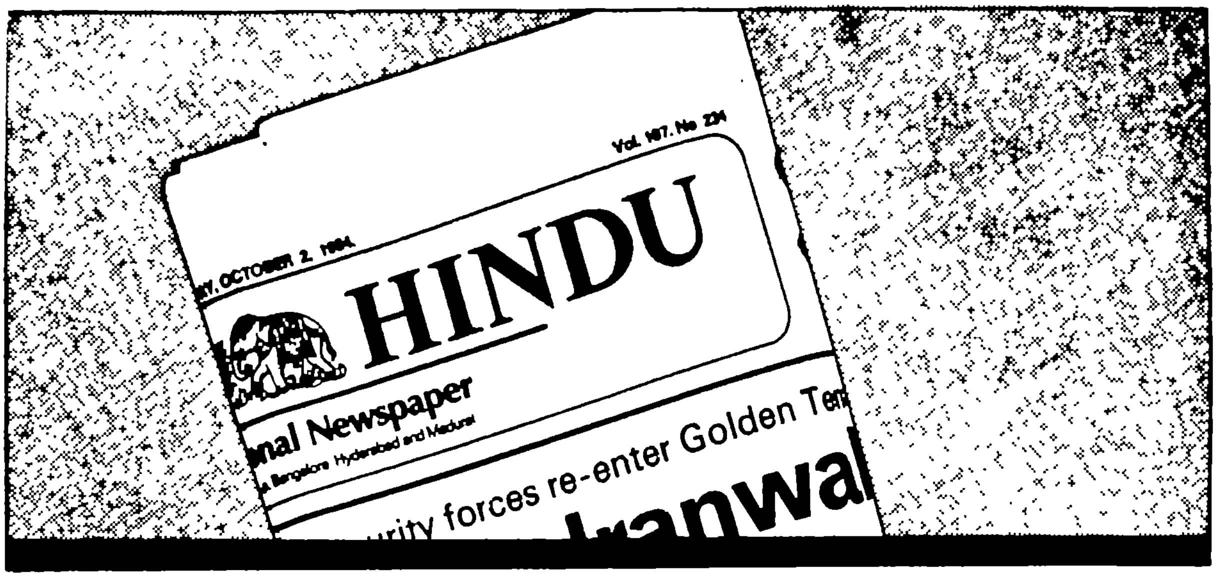
Freedom of the press in our country is epitomised and preserved by publications like **Mainstream** which provide a forum to independent journalists to articulate their views. Indian journalism comes into its own in the pages of such small-budget ventures. They help reinforce our nation's strengths, not merely, compensate for its weaknesses.

Nikhilda has infused the " **Mainstream** " tradition with the essence of his person - pride tempered by humility, the strength of conviction invigorated by openness to reason and above all, staunch nationalism rooted in the pride of a common humanity. We have had, at times, our difference with him and his perceptions, but this is the strength of our democracy and the relationship that the executive and the press must cherish with each other.

I convey my best wishes to all those who have made this publication a success, many of whom I have the added privilege and pride to count among my personal friends.

(P.V. Narasimha Rao)

New Delhi
October 30, 1992



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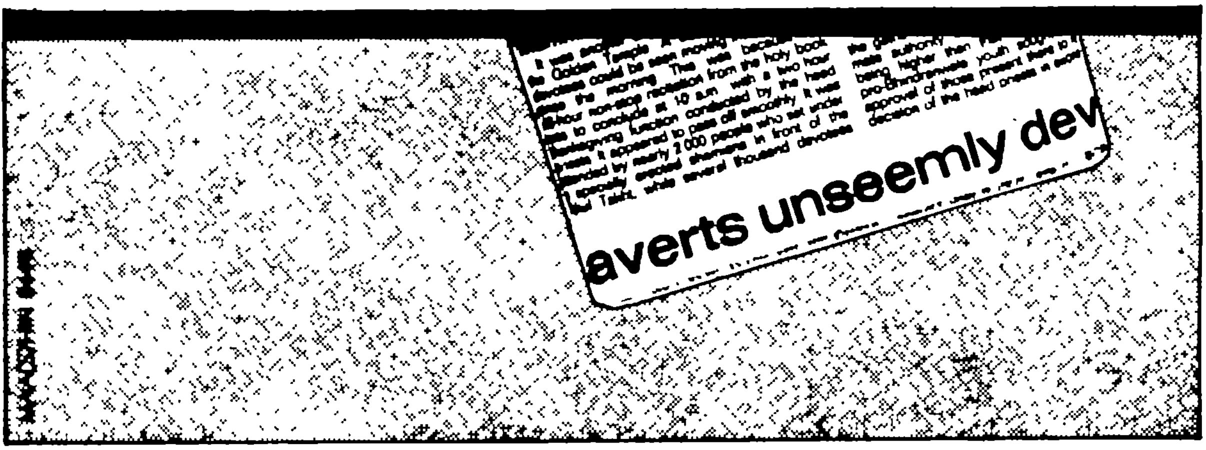

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Rediscovering South Asian Heritage

K.R. NARAYANAN

For two weeks since the inauguration of the First South Asian Festival of the SAARC countries at Delhi by Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, different corners of India have resounded with the mingled melodies and rhythms of South Asia, shone with the splendour of its arts and crafts, and stirred with the sentiments and ideas of its poetry and literature. This Festival has brought together, for the first time, in a comprehensive manner various aspects of the cultural heritage of South Asia—its classical arts, music and dance, crafts, paintings including by children, films and photographs. It has also staged dialogues, discussions and seminars on education and literacy, poetry, literature and the media. Though such interchanges have taken place in the past in spasmodic and isolated ways, it is for the first time that a representative cross-section of the splendid diversity of the culture of the region as a whole has been presented in one country. I would consider this as one of the significant and far-reaching developments in regional cooperation since the SAARC was formed seven years ago.

As the late Rajiv Gandhi put it at the Islamabad Summit on December 29,1988:

> Culture is the medium through which we can best affirm our affinities, while celebrating our diversity.

While geography binds us together with inextricable ties of neighbourliness, culture has caught us all in a silken network of common experience. The roots of our culture go back far and deep into the night of time. They have got intertwined over the centuries producing a cultural scene that is complex and composite. It is this culture that makes the seven nations of South Asia a distinct and inter-dependent entity. Despite all the diversities and differences that exist among us, it is this that makes one South Asian react to another with a delighted shock of recognition.

One of the creative tasks of the SAARC is to bring to the surface this inner affinity and make it an integral part of South Asian cooperation. At the same time, we will have to recognise the differences and varieties of our cultural experience, frankly and boldly, and respect and nourish them with care and understanding. The artisans and artists and the poets and writers who have participated in this Festival are legitimately proud of the particular identities and uniqueness of their creations. But they would also have sensed the basic commonality that overleaps what Rabindranath called "the narrow domestic walls".

The author, the distinguished diplomat, educationist and Vice-President of India, delivered an address at the valedictory session of the First South Asian Festival of the SAARC countries at Thiruvananthapuram on October 24, 1992. This contribution is based on that address.

◆

CULTURE in South Asia is not a superficial superstructure. It is rooted in our history and runs through our society as the sap of the tree of life. Howevermuch it had been overladen and distorted with superstitions and social ills over the centuries, it is culture that had enabled the common people to bear their hardships and sufferings and survive with dignity and a certain sense of the joy of life. I believe that in the unfolding future it would again be our culture that would enable the people of South Asia to cling together and add an aesthetic and a human dimension to the harshly impersonal industrial-technological society towards which we, alongwith the rest of the modernising humanity, are racing. I believe that it might be possible for South Asia to build up an industrial system that is more homely and humane. The spiritual basis of our culture, whatever religion or sect one may belong to, will also facilitate an evolution in that direction.

In this rapidly changing world advanced technologies are threatening to make many of our handicrafts and cottage industries uneconomic and outmoded in terms of methods of production and deprive millions of households of the means of their livelihood. South Asia, which is the home of some of the finest crafts, will have to think out ways of preserving and promoting this precious heritage of arts and crafts. We can, through cooperative efforts, give training to our artisans, extend financial support, upgrade their production technologically, and provide for their products a wide subcontinental market and also outlets into the international market.

South Asia has the capacity to dazzle the rest of the world with its classical as well as its folk arts. The classical music and performing arts of the individual countries have already created serious interest in the developed countries of the world. The folk music and dances have also earned a high reputation. There are few regions which possess so much variety and depth, colour and drama as the South Asian region in their artistic forms. A combined projection of all these on the world stage would startle people everywhere with the richness of our cultural heritage. It would enhance the reputation of each SAARC country more than what it can do on its own. Our film industry has also the same potential which is yet to be fully exploited. As regards television its potentialities are unlimited. Unless we cooperate with one another in the region in this field we would be at the receiving end of images and information, even about ourselves, through satellite and cable networks owned and operated by foreign agencies almost as it was during the colonial period. That would, indeed, be one of the ironies of history.

◆

MAY I say that culture is something more than songs and dances and films and TV shows, however delightful and informative they may be? In the modern world of visual arts and mass entertainment culture has tended to luxuriate in beautiful superficialities. As a French philosopher put it:

> The boundary line between culture and entertainment has become blurry. Today it is common to designate as cultural, activities in which thought plays no role at all.

We are fortunate that in our region even the traditional popular arts and entertainment have sprung from deep cultural roots and are manifestations of our thought-processes and value-system. Nevertheless, it is gratifying that in this Festival sufficient emphasis has been given to thought-laden cultural activities like education and literacy, and poetry and literature. Literacy and education are the basis of a consciously cultural existence. The need for the most widespread cooperation among South Asian countries in this field is self-evident. A fully literate South Asia will be a force in the world. Linked to it is the position of women in our societies. Spreading literacy and education among women, together with uplifting their status and endowing them with rights and power would be to release a major liberating force in our vast region.

In my view some of the most important programmes of the Festival were the seminars on "Future Potential for Cultural and Educational Links", "The Contemporary Literacy Scene : Search for Roots" and the "Media Dialogue". These gave a dimension of thought to the Festival. For purposeful regional cooperation it is essential for us to understand the streams of ideas and thought that flow through the minds of people in the different countries of the region.

While the public has some knowledge of Rabindranath Tagore, Mohammed Iqbal, Nazrul Islam, Faiz Ahmed Faiz and some others we have very little acquaintance with contemporary writers in the countries of the region. Meetings of writers of the region should be a more frequent happening. Their books should be made available to the public in translations and there should be free flow of literature within the region. Anthologies of South Asian poetry and short stories should be made liberally available in translation in English as well as in the major languages of the region. In that way only we answer the lament of Iswar Baral, the Nepali writer: "We are total strangers in a lonely crowd. So near, yet so far."

We in South Asia are prone to talk about our traditional culture and the glorious heritage of our civilisation. The Indian poet A.K. Ramanujam, who lives abroad, once remarked:

> Even one's own tradtion is not one's birth-right; it has to be earned, repossessed.

Thus we cannot take our culture for granted. To be inheritors of it, in the real sense, we have to earn it, repossess it through our own education and efforts. The South Asian Festival is an effort in re-possessing our heritage. It has enabled us to have a glimpse of our collective identity, or should I say, our glorious composite identity. May I add that this identity established through culture has to be buttressed by concrete trade and economic exchanges within the region. Otherwise it would remain weak and fragile. Cooperation, be it in the realm of culture, trade, economics or politics, will not diminish the status of any country or substract from its sovereignty; it will only make an addition to it. I believe that the nations of South Asia will rise to the plenitude of their potentialities only through cooperation among themselves. Working together, we can provide a better life for our people and also make a mark in the world much more than each one of us can do separately. That is the rationale behind the formation of the SAARC. That is the importance of the South Asian Festival in the fundamental field of culture. ■

What Would Sir Syed Say Today?

BADR-UD-DIN TYABJI

I am delighted to be here on this Sir Syed's Day. Thank you for inviting me. My mind flashes back to that memorable day for me, thirty years ago, when as a freshly appointed Vice-Chancellor, I first addressed the University on Sir Syed's Day, October 17, 1962. I had then called upon the spirit of Sir Syed, whose portrait hung before me. There it was Sir Syed's strong, determined, self-confident visage to inspire me. Those appraising eyes, that level look, his powerful nose—upstanding rather like the Rock of Gibraltar; impregnable and dominant amidst the surging white sea of his beard—gave me instant confidence.

So I spoke my mind freely about what the University represented, and the ideals it should have, in the light of what I read in those appraising eyes, sustained by the strength and poise of that dominant upstanding nose, over-riding the turbulence of his beard, just as the Rock of Gibraltar does that of the surrounding ocean.

Today, 30 years later, faced by a more mature and sophisticated audience in the industrial and financial capital of India, invited to speak on Sir Syed's Day, I turn to him once more, enquiring of myself: "What would have Sir Syed said? What would he have advised?" He would certainly have had something to say about current Hindu-Muslim relations, a subject that was of primary interest to him. Did he not liken them to the two eyes of Mother India? They had to focus evenly together to enable Mother India to march steadily forward without stumbling or collapsing. What would he say about the situation as it prevails today?

I am not one who believes that Sir Syed, in striving to build up the broken morale of the Muslims of North India after the 1857 collapse of their attempt to throw out, with the active support of like-motivated non-Muslim compatriots, the stranglehold of the British on the remnants of the former Mughal empire, was aiming to recreate the latter. By then he had fully recognised the overwhelming superiority of Britain's Western techniques of management, learning and the utilisation of science with new technology for buttressing and developing the power and material progress of a state and its peoples.

The author is a distinguished educationist and a former Vice-Chancellor of the Aligarh Muslim University. He delivered this speech at the Aligarh Muslim University Old Boys' gathering at Bombay on October 17, 1992, observed as Sir Syed's Day in the AMU.

He was convinced that without a switch-over to this kind modernism by Indians they could never get the British off their backs. A long apprenticeship under the British for this purpose seemed necessary and inevitable. He saw that the lead given by Raja Rammohan Roy and others in this direction, had been taken up by the Hindus to good effect. They had taken to English and its concomitant "Modernism" much more readily and profitably than the Muslims. The reason for the difference between the Hindu-Muslim response to this call is plain. For the Hindus, it was more a less just a switch-over from acquiring one form of foreign mores and language (Persian) during Mughal rule or hegemony to acquiring their English equivalents. It was almost as easy as changing the type of one's hat or the cut of the suit one wore when dining out. For the Muslims it was much more painful and fundamental. It was the official discarding and downgrading of the main source, the fountain-head. If their civilisation, the ideals of which constituted the core of their beings and their aspirations in this life and thereafter.

Sir Syed's attempt was to bridge the gap that lay between the unequal effect of the impact of the British takeover of India on Hindus and on Muslims: to retain or regain the former status of Muslims vis-a-vis Hindus, as one of the two eyes of Mother India. That he succeeded in doing this to a considerable degree is undeniable; but that it should have led to the partition of the country was not what he had aimed at or worked for. In my personal view he would have opposed it.

But it has taken place nonetheless—and we today have to try and learn from the way in which Sir Syed dealt with the paramount power of his time—that is, the British—when we deal with the paramount power of today—that is, the Hindu elite —in order to regain for the Muslim community its historic importance and influence in present-day India.

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◆

AS I pointed out in my Dr Yusuf Najmuddin Memorial Lecture at the Anjuman-i-Islam, Bombay on May 19, 1992, our Constitution not only gives the minorities of India (amongst whom the Muslims are by far the largest) absolutely equal rights as citizens of India as it gives to the majority; it goes even further. It enjoins the state to ameliorate their backward status in all national spheres of activity by giving them a helping hand. This 'helping hand' may take the form of protective discrimination in favour of a backward minority, or in plainer terms 'reservation' in various fields. Nor does the Indian Constitution frown upon the minorities as an inherent weakness in Indian national life, or as an obstruction to the formulation of an egalitarian society. Far from it, it views the minorities as a healthy variety, enriching Indian national life in myriad ways.

There is however, as one—who is not purblind or congenitally incapable of seeing anything except what he is predetermined to see—knows, a vast difference between principles enunciated in Constitutions, through laws, or, for that matter, religions; their enshrinement as ideal objectives in statute books and scriptures and their active implementation and working in practice.

So far as the Minority Rights conceded in our Constitution are concerned, it would not be far wrong to say that it was more the enlightened, liberal, egalitarian sentiments of the principal leaders of our national movement—persons like Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad—that prevailed over those of the bulk of their followers and of the general sentiment in the country at large.

The latter did not desire or dare to flout their leaders on these issues, but they saw to it later that the whole subject of encouraging administratively stricken and deprived minorities was given a bad odour politically and socially. Anyone trying to do something for his own community, even if it was for the purposes enjoined and lauded in our Constitution, was dubbed a communalist, or even an anti-nationalist. A new form of Two Nation or Hydra-Headed Nation theory—divisions between the "Haves" and "Haves-nots"—began to be propounded. The hysteria aroused and the violent excesses committed over the mere announcement of the Mandal Commission's recommendations showed clearly how divided the views and sentiments of the powerful, entrenched elite that mans and runs the government of the country are on taking practical steps to implement the principles and directives of the Constitution: in particular those that seek to redress and eliminate the imbalances prevailing between them and the minority and backward communities in the Indian social system and administration.

These facts have to be accepted as facts of life inherent in the history of our country, and the texture and fabric of her social and political life. It cannot be willed away by the dictates of even such great spiritual and political leaders as Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, and others of comparable eminence or spirit.

The change has to come about not through confrontation, but by the minorities themselves winning their place in the hearts, confidence and conscience of the majority by demonstrating in practical fashion that by their presense they can enrich the common pool of the resources of the nation as a whole materially as well as psychologically. This requires a joint effort to be made; not just a "give" by one side and a "take" on the other; either on the part of the majority or the minority. There has to be a two-way traffic. I am convinced that there are a sufficient number on both sides who, if approached in the right way, would respond to the call.

So far, however, after the cataclysm of partition the only real signs of this taking place that I see are in the fields of film-making, sports, music, drug-trafficking and the Don-dominated regions of the underworld! However much I may deplore the existence of the last two fields of activity in our society, I must confess that, ironically, it gives me some satisfaction as well. It engenders the hope that observing such successful collaboration in anti-social joint ventures might induce other entrepreneurs engaged in more worthy and productive enterprises to adopt their organisational and representational pattern of employment: free from all ethnic, racial and social prejudices.

◆

I have recently read an admirable study (disfigured unfortunately by that smallpox epidemic that has stricken Indian English writing—the wrong use of

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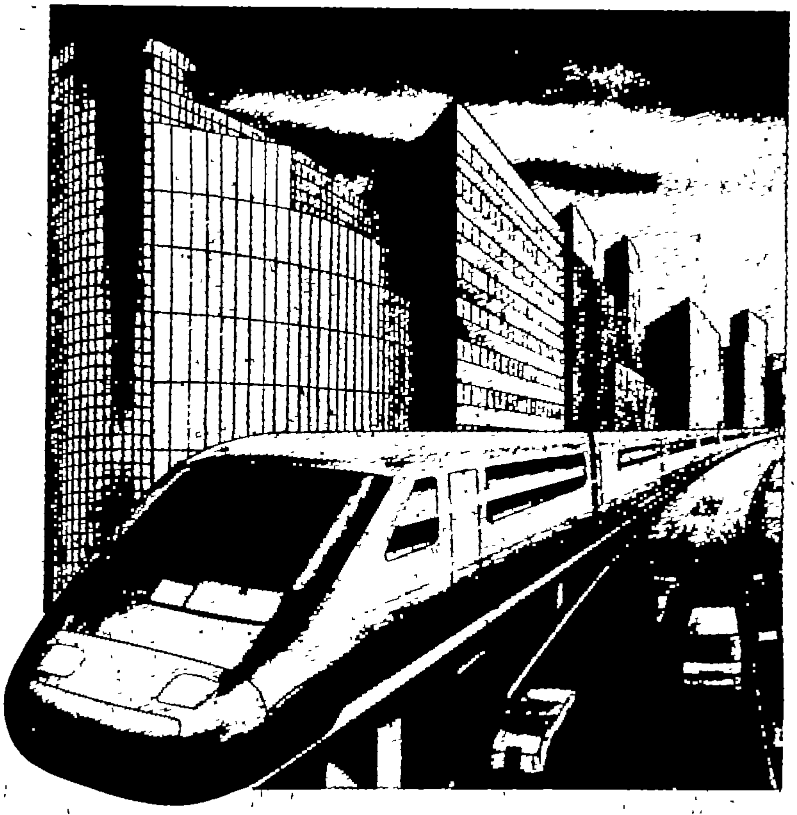

Is that Nariman Point in the distance?

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the definite and indefinite articles, compounded by wrong spelling and widespread printer's devilry) on Hindu-Muslim relations. It is entitled *The Eternal Web* written by Shalini Mehta of the Punjab University, Chandigarh, and published by Cosmo Publishers, New Delhi 1992.

This empirical study was carried out during the past fifteen years. It is based on field investigations conducted in the northern belt of India—Kanpur, Lucknow, Delhi, Meerut and particularly between 1973-77 for a research project entitled "Hindu Muslim Relations in Delhi". Sadar Bazaar was the prime focus of this latter study. I have extracted what follows from this study.

Sadar Bazaar before 1947 was more or less a Muslim-dominated locality except for the area known as Pahari Dheeraj which was occupied by Hindus. In 1948 Bara Hindu Rao and its surrounding Muslim dominated areas were declared a protected zone by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister, for Muslims desirous of staying on in India. This cut down the outflow of Muslims from the area, as well as brought in others from the unprotected areas like Daryaganj, Paharganj and Multani Dhanda. All through the partition riots this area did not experience a single major communal outburst, although its neighbours like Sabzi Mandi and Roshanara Road were completely engulfed in them. It was late in June 1973 that Sadar Bazaar recorded its first communal riot.

From 1947 onwards, houses vacated by Muslims were occupied mostly by Hindu refugees from Pakistan, This influx of Hindus upset the status-quo of the local population. The new entrants brought their own cultural values and, above all, business values. With official help and shrewd business sense they established themselves in the economic sphere. In contrast, the Muslims were highly demoralised in the first post-partition phase. Many for long kept debating the issue of migrating to Pakistan. Others found it difficult to sustain their business interests under the growing influence of Hindu-owned businesses, Sadar Bazaar developed into one of the biggest commercial centres in India, but in its growth Muslim merchants were mainly excluded. Muslims, even now, continue to be the best craftsmen, but poor in the art of selling. Most of the goods manufactured by them are sold in the market by Hindu brokers.

The Muslims of Delhi largely live in and around the walled city of Old Delhi. Between 1979 and 1989 almost 50 per cent of the newly rich Hindu merchants moved out of the locality because it had become unworthy of their new economic status.

On vacation these houses have again been bought by an emerging newly affluent few among the Muslims. However, only four Hindus interviewed said that they only wanted to live in Hindu localities. Similarly, very few Muslims bluntly stated that they wished to stay only in Muslim localities. Out of four hundred people interviewed 139 were graduates and above. There was no significant difference between the educational levels of Hindus and Muslims. Approximate information about incomes ranged widely from a minimum of Rs 250 to Rs 3000 a month and above. About 70.25 per cent knew Hindi, 54.25 per cent English and 57.5 per cent Urdu. Though only 48.12 per cent Muslims said they knew Hindi, spoken Urdu is very similar to spoken Hindi generally in Delhi.

The Hindu-Muslim settlement pattern in Sadar Bazaar may be categorised as follows :

a) Muslim-dominated or exclusively Muslim *mohallas*.
b) Ditto—Hindu.
c) Mixed localities where the communities are almost equal or in the proportion of 60/40 per cent.

Some of the exclusively Hindu or Muslim dominated *mohallas* are more or less reserved ones where a Hindu or Muslim respectively cannot buy property. Houses are not even let out to members of the other community despite the fact that their own respective exclusive *mohallas* are adjacent or opposite each other; so they share a common market as well as the limited recreational facilities available.

Only seven per cent of the Hindus and 20.5 per cent of the Muslim residents regard their relations with each other as cordial. The common complaint of the Muslims against Hindus is that they do not dine with them. On visiting Muslim houses Hindus often refuse to eat anything offered to them though cold drinks bought in the market are accepted. Muslims, therefore, find it humiliating to accept food from Hindus though there are no religious restrictions preventing them from eating with Hindus.

◆

THE general presumption that neighbourliness promotes social integration is belied. On the contrary, neighbourhood relations are characterised by conflict and tension and a strange kind of isolation. People pretend to be friendly when actually they are not. Edibles are accepted but not eaten. A Hindu landlord is always hesitant about renting a house to a Muslim and vice versa. There are reservations and inhibitions in regard to each other in practically every sphere of social interaction. All attempts to develop friendships appear to have an ulterior motive behind them. Because of this perception of their motivation they do not make any significant contribution to Hindu-Muslim integration; nor do they help in influencing individuals to change their preconceived community stereotypes of each other.

There is, however, a small but growing group to be found among both Muslims and Hindus. They pick and choose their friends on the basis of compatibility and mutual interests. Their friend's religion is personal to them. When they discuss each other's religions, the philosophic content of the text is more important than overstated opposites. The majority of Muslims interviewed from this group are willing to suspend and/or revoke rituals that obstruct communal integration. They favour restrictions on polygamy, support family planning measures, and oppose ostentatious performances of *"kurbani"*. Likewise Hindus in this category do not regard caste restrictions against inter-dining and even inter-marriage as inflexible or sacrosanct. This is not to suggest that the alter and ego involved in such dyadic relations have no community commitments—only that the community commitments are not allowed to become subjectively negative.

The reason why I have taken so much of your time in this recital of Hindu-Muslim relations in Sadar Bazaar, Delhi is that I fear that the situation depicted in it, as seen through the refreshingly unbiased but keen eyes of Shalini Mehta, is more/or less a true picture of what prevails in most urban localities in India where the two communities, for reasons that are beyond their control, find themselves residing cheek by jowl with each other.

Turning Sir Syed's gaze on it, I would venture to assert that he would consider this situation most disappointing and disquieting. He would have been pained at learning that two sets of Indian citizens possessing equal civic rights were unable to live together as friendly neighbours. He would have sought ways and means to bridge the gap between them. Had he not kept the gates of the Aligarh Muslim University open for non-Muslims precisely for this purpose? He had invited them in because he wanted Hindus and Muslims to learn to live together, cooperate with each other, learn from each in a civilised fashion. I would suggest that the Aligarh Old Boys' Association should apply their minds to this problem and take some practical steps to remedy it. It would be a worthy undertaking in memory of Sir Syed and his two eyes theory for Mother India.

◆

IT is inevitable that I should say something on the Ram Janmabhoomi and Babri Masjid controversy in this context. I have of course been following it with anguish in my heart and hope on my lips. I have been gratified by the comparatively temperate stand taken on this issue by the Aligarh Muslim University and its students. They have also behaved admirably compared to what the Jamia Millia Islamia did in their cooked-up tantrums over the dead carcas of Salman Rushdie's novel, and again on Dr Bedar'a most sincere and scholarly Indian Muslim's remarks on the connotations of the term *"Kaffir"* in the Qu'ran. When Muslims are capable of getting up so much steam and fury over issues that barely touch the outer fringe of their own faith, surely those amongst us who have been born and bred on this soil, have eaten and drunk from it, should be more sympathetically aware(and publically express that awareness) of what Ram stands for, and what Hindus feel about anything that concerns him in this ancient land. Personally, I would place Ram in the foremost ranks of the Prophets who preceded Hazrat Mohammad, *Sallala-alhaiyam-va-sallam*, some of whom nearer his own advent, are mentioned by name in the Qu'ran, others far distant only by implication, but implicitly.

A distinguished Congress leader told me recently: "I can fight the BJP, the VHP and others of that ilk, but I cannot and will not fight Ram." I replied: "Nor do I want you to fight Ram; I respect Ram. I should like to do what Shri Ram would have approved of in this situation." I do not believe that Shri Ram would countenence the demolition or uprooting of the Babri Masjid, a place of worship that has stood for over 400 years, or approve the building of a temple in his honour on the demolished site. It would go quite contrary to the concept of Ram Rajya formulated by Mahatma Gandhi that is mirrored in the Indian Constitution that I have sworn to uphold. I agree that a worthy Ram temple should be built in the Ram Janmabhoomi area. I should have liked this to be a national memorial and to be able personally to participate in planning it. There is no reason why this temple cannot be so designed and built, so as to fit in with the existing Babri Masjid without offending either Hindu or Islamic sentiments. There has to be a give and take by both communities in this matter. Our aim should be to promote communal harmony and not confrontation for either vote-catching or losing. ■

Consensual Nationalism

An Approach Paper

KRISHAN KANT

From the vantage point of the last decade of the twentieth century we are in a position to look back dispassionately at the whole scenario of the country's history through this century. We saw the rise of the nationalist spirit in the first decade when Bengal was not allowed to be partitioned by the people of India; and from then on the further evolution of the glorious freedom struggle led by men who were world leaders by any standards. They were pioneers in the global struggle against imperialist domination. We saw the emergence of the Mahatma, the leader of non-violent mass struggle for human dignity and rights of the weaker sections on a scale not witnessed before in human history.

In spite of the historic struggle, the spirit of nationalism was not strong and pervasive enough to stop the partition of India nearly forty years after the resurgence of the spirit which was so powerful as to thwart the British move to partition Bengal. We agreed to the partitioning of the country, a development about which Gandhiji had said that it could take place only over his dead body. Acharya Narendra Dev rightly said that there was not enough nationalism in the country; otherwise India would not have been divided.

After independence, the nationalist spirit has been getting diffused day by day despite an economic growth which can be compared to China notwithstanding deficiencies in many directions.

Now there is a deep concern all over the country about the dangers of disunity and fragmentation. The feeling is so overpowering that we are not able to see through and analyse clearly the origins of this cancer eroding the body-politic of the nation.

In order to understand the crisis that India is facing and the degeneration that has set in in all facets of our national life, we have to trace the central source of this malady.

Parameters of Power and its Values

On a dispassionate analysis one finds that it is directly connected with the operation of politics and government at various levels. Political interests of the powerful in the seats of power determine the functioning of institutions often manipulating situations, and conditioning the people.

This is visible in all walks of life and in all the four estates as they are called: Legislature, Judiciary, Executive and the Media. It has affected the whole society—mind-sets of the individual, family and the community, the village and above, in all spheres. Many critical situations were the creation of political exigencies of the people in power. Even economic decisions become subservient to parochial interests whether in the government or the Opposition. Both are a part of the system. Lenin had said that politics is the dominant factor and on occasions economics has been shaped by it. Not only economics but social values of a society are influenced by the values of power, that is, (i) those in power; (ii) the process for achievement of power; and (iii) the operation of power.

The relative positions of (i) and (ii) have changed during the last century or more. In the days of kings and kingdoms of feudal lords, (i)—that is, these in power—proved critical. The divine right of the king was transferred to the son after the demise of the king who ruled the kingdom. Otherwise, the change in power would come when the armies of another kingdom took over the kingdom, killed or deposed the king and a new king was anointed by virtue of the military strength of the invading army.

The right to vote and the exercise of vote are essential ingredients of a democracy. But equally, if not more important, is the content of democracy and the democratic process. In the days of feudal kingdoms, the character of a king determined the character of the court and his courtiers. The ruling elite connected to the court or the king influenced the the lives of the people living in vast unconnected areas to a minimal extent.

Hence the well-known proverb: what does it matter if the king is Ram or Ravan? Now the situation has changed. Transport and communications are integrating the polity in a geographical

The author, a noted public figure, is currently the Governor of Andhra Pradesh.

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sense into what maybe called the country-village. The interconnection and interdependence are increasing and unavoidable.

After the coming in of participatory democracy (ii)—that is, the process for achievement of power—became the dominant factor in determining the social, political and economic values and goals of society through a process of upgrading and devaluing morality and a system of gains and penalties.

The prime cause for the failure of the Mahatma and the national movement to keep India united was the introduction by the British of a basic change in the process of power—that is, separate electorates, quota for religious communities, etc. In spite of all the sacrifices, the exemplary characters of Gandhiji and other national leaders, the constructive programmes, the national awakening and national unity, all the efforts for Hindu-Muslim unity came to a naught before the grinding wheel of the altered Basic Process of Power. Gandhiji and the national movement and their achievements became subservient to it. The rules of the game of power, as described by Lala Lajpat Rai, determined the direction of the events or the destination for India—the partition. The division of the country was the natural consequence. An ancient country like India has divisions of castes, communities, ethnicities and religions. The process of power can help in exacerbating these divisions or transcending these divisions in course of time. Power sharing is the most dominating force driving individuals, groups or societies. That makes or unmakes, strengthens or distorts and finally conditions the psyche and minds of the people.

Electoral Process: a Flawed Process of Power

Elections and what we call the electoral process are in fact the mechanism through which people acquire and lose power, what may be in short called the Process of Power. The term 'electoral' camouflages the real nature or potential of the critical process which determines the character of everything in polity and society. The character of the persons to be elected to power is determined by the process. The political leaders and political parties are moulded by the dynamics of the political process. Mahatma Gandhi and the national movement were helpless before the Basic Process of Power providing separate electorates. That process was continuously conditioning and shaping the psyche of electorates—Muslims or Hindus or Sikhs. It was encouraging the development of communal identities, reducing the significance of the national identity. After the enforcement of separate electorates there was no Indian as far as the Basic Process of Power was concerned but only Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. All national endeavours of Gandhiji and other leaders and the national movement could not prevail against the entrenched process of power.

Process of Power: Unsuited to India's Genius

India is an ancient society with caste, communal, ethnic and race divisions inherited from long history and yet bound together by common civilisational traditions and historical memories. It has been a communitarian society based on these divisions and subdivisions. But it has been maintaining an essential unity under the guidance of Saints and Dharmacharyas (without the classical framework of religious traditons based on the Prophet and one Book). We had the tradition of transcendence through the social institutions of the Sanyas Ashram and Sanyasins, which also served as a vehicle for social transcendance. For, the Sanyasin came from all social castes and divisions, and belonged to all. In that sense the divisions were not rigid.

The process of power prescribed by the British had two elements: (i) separate electorates and the quota system on religious basis; and (ii) the first-past-the-post system of election, that is, any candidate getting the largest number of votes to be declared elected. After independence, while the first element dealing with separate electorates was removed from our law, the second continued to have the place of honour. In my view this is the focal point of our political cancer.

The first-past-the-post process of power exacerbated these divisions and rigidified them rather than transcending them. We should have devised a process of power suitable to the genius of our civilisation which could keep the advantages of our communitarian life intact while introducing the modern concept of democracy and competitive politics and economics in a new stage of historical development. Even in some Western democracies, the electoral method of first-past-the-post is not the only one in vogue. In the context of India, with a pluralistic and fragmented society, this system has proved to be inherently divisive.

The present process of first-past-the-post system encourages all social evils of casteism, communalism, muscle and money power and elevates the practitioners of these values to the highest seats of power. A person elected through the exercise of these evils legitimises them and gives them systemic

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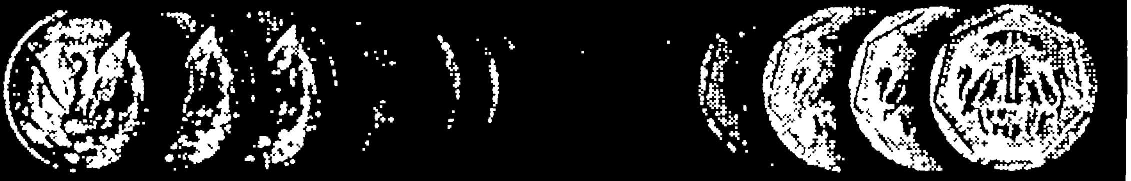

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respectability. During the struggle for freedom which was no doubt a struggle for power, the recognition of leadership demanded the exercise of the values of service, sacrifice and suffering. Those values are no more required to get into power. So they have become disutilitarian as far as gaining power is concerned.

Vote 'Capturing': Varied Afflictions

In the first-past-the-post process of power, capturing or influencing a minority of booths with muscle and money power enables one to win a constituency. This minority of captured or influenced votes puts a candidate ahead of the other candidates and he wins the seat though he may not get a majority. He also gets into power at the State and Central levels and rules the state with these values which put him in power. Politics based on the caste and interest conglomerates results in the victors in elections looking after their constituencies vis-a-vis those who voted against them.

This process has tended to divide the rural and urban areas on caste, religious and interest based groupings. The divisions are sought to be perpetuated to make the groups into solid vote-banks. Corruption linkage with organised crime and interference with administration are the direct result of this kind of politics. The constituency for victory is the caste, communal, goonda and money power. The elected representative has to serve that constituency and nurse it.

In this situation the need for building up political parties on ideologies and programmes has become irrelevant. That is why the need for activism at the ground level for political parties is being reduced. There are today just caste and interest group conglomerates. Nationalist approach and nationalist values have lost their relevance. They are for rhetoric only. Lack of nationalist approach is replaced by populism which is destructive of economy and polity and meant to appease people without intending to implement the promises.

Caste, communal mafia gangsters and black money leaders are pampered and pushed up in all walks of life, in all institutions and in all fields of activity. Economic and political climbers are the visible and dominant figures. They are seen at the higher echelons of power. These influence the civil and police officials at the lowest level through the government to keep their pockets of influence. It is these pockets which are useful at the time of the elections. Violence, corruption and chicanery dominate at the ground level with the support of the top. These *dadas* rule the roost—no department of civil administration or life is free from its claws.

What happened in Punjab is a dire reflection of the working of this process of power, that is, the first-past-the-post. Political leaders accelerated divisions of the Punjabi community into Sikhs and Hindus to consolidate their vote-banks. They encouraged and sustained communal, casteist, goonda and corrupt elements. They were successful in enlarging the easiest social breach of Hindus and Sikhs. After the breach in psyche became politically profitable, the process leading to Blue Star was inevitable. The Blue Star could have been postponed but not avoided. It was the natural logic of the Basic Process of Power, just as partition of the country and creation of Pakistan were the logical end of the operation of the Basic Process of Power of separate electorate and communal weightage. A proper approach to the solution of the Punjab problem is not possible unless there is a change in the Basic Process of Power.

The New Basis

The Basic Process of Power must give the people the right to express their disapproval of all who in their views have subverted the democratic system and vulgarised it for individual and partisan interests. The right to reject all on the ballot in a legitimate and non-violent manner is inherent in the exercise of democracy as the right to exercise a positive vote. At present, the right to vote is limited to giving a positive vote in favour of one candidate only. The present system in many cases brings up candidates all of whom the population would like to reject. But the present electoral system does not give them that right.

Democracy implies not merely a choice among alternative unsuitable candidates. It should enable people to indicate that none of them come up to their expectations. When the choice of the people is restricted to a choice between two evils, frustration is the result. Then people indulge in violence and blood-letting to express their anger, frustration and alienation from the system which does not give them any other avenue of expression. The election manifestos are not intended to be implemented and promises made are either populistic in character and economically ruinous when fulfilled or to be ignored adding further to the alienation of the people.

The Two Imperatives

So the content of the process of power has to be changed as to include two principles: (i) the Right to Negate all and not voting in favour of anyone; and (ii) only those will be elected who get an absolute majority of the votes polled. A majority of the voting booths cannot be captured or purchased easily. Majority also gives a representative character to the elected.

Of Revolutionary Potential

Gandhiji characterised the process of power through elections as a subtitute for bloody revolution and even mass civil disobedience. When armed revolutions are no more possible, there is a danger that terrorism may grow as a result of alienation. This may in turn lead to the strengthening of violent power in the hands of the state which also can be misused. Gandhiji had led mass civil disobedience and he knew how difficult and tortuous it was to organise it. Those movements were meant to unite and mobilise people behind a cause and to achieve an objective.

The elections of today tend to polarise the nation and excerbate the divisions. This needs to be changed and replaced by a process which will strengthen the unity of the nation. The electoral process can become an instrument for promotion of unity as well as change in the direction of the people's interest. Legal mass mobilisation of the people is taking place around the ballot box periodically but this process is not being utilised to rally the consciousness of people around a national purpose. The Indian society is so structured that no grouping is in a majority. In our urban and rural constituencies if the electoral process lays down the prerequisite of getting an absolute majority of the votes polled, then instead of being divisive, the uniting forces will get strengthened. Those who wish to get elected will have to devise methods which will make them transcend caste and ethnic divisions and get elected by a majority.

If the two factors—the right to reject all candidates and the requirement of an absolute majority—are enforced, the parties will be compelled to choose candidates who would not generate antipathy among the voters but who will be able to secure a majority. That would mean men of ill-repute cannot be nominated as candidates nor those who are likely to foster parochial interests. Only such candidates will be set up who have a reasonable chance of getting a majority.

The Present System: Profile of Scourge

Though the present system has functioned in the interest of the upper classes, the interesting fact is that because of the basic flaws in the process of power, all classes are unhappy and dissatisfied for reasons of their own. It has divided families, communities and groups. The balance and poise that were the hall-mark of the Indian society have been lost. The increasing violence that we witness is a reflection both of the increasing greed and injustice, and popular reactions to them. When justice is not available through the legal institutions of the state like the Executive, Judiciary, Parliament and Legislature it leads to violence. Those who are in power want to grow rich quick. They use not only the state authority but also maintain and sustain illegal unsocial forces and give them state protection.

One sees this phenomenon all over the country in various shapes and forms. No work can be got done without a bribe or political contact. Justice at various levels is unavailable. Police does not help. Fleecing people is considered legitimate by petty and higher bureaucracy. Honest officers in the bureaucracy are at a discount. Rich and poor, businessman and industrialist, teacher and taught, beggar and money-grabber, land-grabber—everybody is unhappy with the system. A new gradation of anti-social elements is taking place. Those who were powerful yesterday are being replaced by more powerful and sophisticated ones. Even those who manipulated the system are today disgruntled, each for one's own reason. A general sense of alienation is growing. There is an overwhelming demand for change in the system though no mainstream articulation of the nature and direction of change has taken place.

Concurrently a major disillusionment is sweeping all over the world about some of the long cherished values and approaches. The change we should aim at is to bring about a structure of consensus to promote a consensual nationalism. Such a structure and process should help transcend the differences fostered by caste, sect, religion, class, language and ethnicity. It has to be based on our common civilisational heritage, fully provide for individual rights and full development of one's potential and contribution to society, nation and the world.

This has to take into account the vast disorienting changes taking place in our society transiting from the pre-industrial to the industrial stage. Now there is no factor of stability in the form of joint family system or extended family. Individuals and traditional institutions which were once looked upon to render justice or give impartial advice are vanishing or have already vanished. Families are breaking up for want of such advice from sympathetic and well-meaning relatives. Family wreckages are multiplying. One can see the same affliction even in respect of the break-up of political parties and institutions. Ordinary people are running from pillar to post without any solace. I was told by a *sarpanch* in a Punjab village that one of his sons was telling him that he did not want to hear about justice and fairplay from him but only whether he sides with him or his brother.

Lord Krishna said in *Mahabharat* that in a society where impartial personages are unavailable, it drifts into civil strife. Rapid industrialisation and commercialisation have wrecked our traditional values and atomised our society without the compensating values of sense of fairness and justice. Hence a rapid fragmentation is taking place at the ground level.

An impartial person was respected in our society and always had a place of honour. Such persons were considered the wise people. Till some decades ago one could point out such people in every village, town, neighbourhood and in any sphere of activity. This value of impartiality has been downgraded and at many places eliminated from the famly and the village up to the top institutions in the country.

The moral and social crises in the country, visible in the working of all the political and social institutions, represent the ramifications of this crises in our society. This has percolated to all levels from the seats of power. These evils generated through the operation of the Basic Process of Power in politics has polluted our social, religious and moral life.

To bring out the Best in Us

Gandhiji has written in his last Will and Testament that India has still to attain social, moral and economic independence. We must mark his priorities. Social and moral independence comes before economic independence. Our march towards social and moral independence has had serious setbacks arising out of the Basic Political Process of Power. This model of the process of power has been imitated in all spheres of life and in all activities in panchayats, trade unions, university elections, corporations and other organisations of all kinds and spheres of activities. And everywhere we find people going through the process of elections in form but violating the basic spirit.

Politics has come to mean partisanship and violence. All means are considered fair in politics as in love and war. Criminalisation of politics has led to politicisation of criminality. Soon they may take over the constitutional seats of power unless the nation acts now to prevent such a development. The present national crisis and the situations in Punjab and Kashmir, besides the interference by Pakistan, are because our politicians and the process of power had legitimised criminality. Capitalists and labour both consider it legitimate. Even in the university and corporation poll they use it as a legitimate instrument to achieve victory in the elections.

If the social, political and moral crisis has to be met and we have to bring back in India a society where impartiality, consensus and wisdom, peace and tranquillity are to prevail, the two principles of majority and negation in voting need to be ingrained into the social process and made a part and parcel of the national psyche. This has to be consciously done by a deliberately worked out process in order to introduce the principles into the social and political structures. This will be a structured approach to consensus.

Gandhiji used to term our freedom struggle as a civilisation battle. And he was proud of the basics of our civilisational inheritance which permitted full intellectual freedom to the individual and tried to combine it with a communitarian approach. The traditional communitarian approach based on village community has to yield place to the modern democratic one structured from the village panchayat to the Parliament in Delhi. In developing these structures our basic philosophical and moral values will have to be synthesised with the modern concepts of human rights.

There is a lot of talk on decentralisation. At the same time fears have been expressed that decentralisation with the present first-past-the-post election will lead to greater violence and injustice and rule through money and muscle power will become the order of the day. Decentralisation should not mean decentralisation of patronage and corruption. The only remedy is to use the combination of negative vote and absolute majority requirement, the majority percentage being fixed higher as the constituency becomes smaller in numbers.

The present represents the age of the common man. Swami Vivekananda spoke of the age of the Shudras—of the common people who had not upto then been part of the system where policy directions were decided. Now the common man can only choose among the candidates offered to him. In the

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proposed system of negative vote and absolute majority requirement those who exercise power will be held accountable and be rejected indicating the disillusionment of the population with particular decision-makers. This is what happened in the Soviet Union. Using this mechanism Gorbachev was able to clean up the Communist Party system and effect systemic changes without violence.

The Logic of Right of Negation

When Right to Reject and election through absolute majority are introduced, a new situation will arise. Because there is no provision of Negation in the present Basic Process of Power (BPP)—all political parties continue to offer similar kinds of candidates and indulge in similar behaviour to get elected. No genuine debates take place in spite of the existence of a multipolar free society. Violence continues to envelop the system for which there seems to be no answer.

In the proposed system, a candidate in order to get elected will have to persuade the majority of the people to vote for him and conduct himself in such a way that a majority of the people will not vote against him. Getting a majority of votes from a constituency is not the same thing as surviving the choice to the people to cast the rejection vote. People often go to the polls to vote against somebody. Most of the so-called waves are in fact Rejection Vote translated as vote for the rival party. Once people have the choice to reject they will be able to speak out their minds freely, not being constriained to choose between a number of undesirables. *The Rejection Vote will create a situation which will make everybody come to the ground.* They will be consciously joining the national process at the booth. Genuine workers and leaders in all classes, castes, professions will work out, step by step, solutions to genuine national problems. Since we do not have majorities, different castes, groups and interests will have to transcend their differences and parochial interests to get a candidate elected with an absolute majority, surviving the Rejection Vote. Here the system will compel them to move in the direction of national consensus.

A new situation has developed after independence. There is no people's organisation of all classes and castes and professions after independence. There are no 'people' in the collective sense of the term. 'People' are 'people' when they have a common objective. At the time of the struggle for freedom, in spite of differences between political, economic and social approaches, they were together on the common objective of 'freedom'. So they could join together or could emotionally feel together to struggle to achieve freedom.

After the achievement of freedom, the people have been divided into 'interest groups'. Each group pursues its own parochial interest often in conflict with others. When leaders and political parties talk in the name of the people, in fact they mean only particular interest groups in their favour. Development has not become a uniting ideal. It is divisive according to the interests. It is only a common national objective that unites a nation. That is why the spirit of nationalism was aroused either when we were subjugated or under foreign attack. Can there be a common national objective when we have achieved freedom? It seemed difficult a few years back. Now the desire to change the present system by changing the process of power can be the uniting factor since all classes, castes, religious groups—in spite of their differences—want change. Secondly, the new international and national challenges to unity and integrity of the country can be a unifying factor provided there is the determination to give up the present conflictual approach to politics and replace it by a structural consensual process. Thirdly, only through such a process greater autonomy and decentralisation are feasible and not in the present one. This gives a chance to decriminalise politics.

The values of the freedom struggle changed our psyche in certain respects. But Gandhiji's emphasis on social and moral liberation was not pursued. Through this process we should attempt to carry out those objectives. The two principles of *Negation* and *Absolute Majority of votes* constitute a *mantra* which will build up individually and socially the morality of the people through its application to the Basic Process of Power and in all other electoral processes in the society. The value of consensus and impartiality will be developed in the psyche of the people just as election has seeped in as a value.

International Context

These developments in our country have also to be viewed in the international context which is undergoing cataclysmic changes. In the international politics of today three major trends are visible all over the world.

First, pluralistic democratisation is making headway. This is in line with the value we have accepted in this country.

Secondly, there is a demand for greater autonomy

(Continued on page 58)

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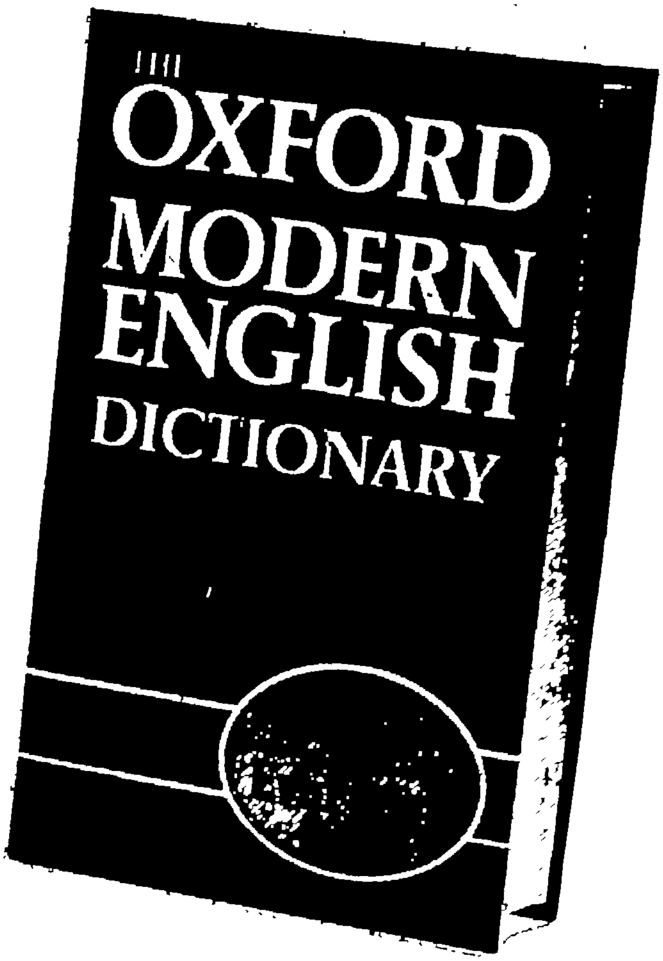

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State and Rights Movement in India

UPENDRA BAXI

Let me first file a caveat of resistance to the tyranny of the singular. Despite the verarching grid of sovereign power, the state onstitutes a variety of multiplicities; in India, the tate at the local level symbolises itself often in icrofascism of power; while the nation-state elebrates its commitment to the rule of law it also llows space even for (what I have elsewhere called) urplus repression or reign of terror. It is a historic act that rule of law does 'peacefully' coexist with he reign of terror.

Similarly, there is no nationwide human rights ovement; there are only human rights movements. he trajectory of resistance to undemocratic practices f power, entailing profound violations of human ights is yet to be fully traced and understood. India s yet to find her own history, and historians of uman rights.

This raises the question, partly one of method, oncerning historiography. The violation of rights tands embedded in the genealogy of state and ower. Thus, a history of state formation ought to llow enough scope for the narrative of how rights-nunciation occurs, and how violations of rights ialectically interrogate practices of power. But the iscourse on the life of the state in India suggests mply that human rights perspective does not rovide any vantage point in the narration of state ormative practices. On the other hand, any attempt t narrativising the state which privileges human ights lays itself open to somewhat justifiable riticism of inadequacy and even distortion. But uch privileging would indeed be critical for an nderstanding of the growth and development of he state ideology and its hegemonic apparatuses.

There is further the question of hegemonic emporalities Would it be anachronistic to seek the ite of human rights consciousness in the early phases of the nationalist movement? Or to interrogate the leadership of the freedom struggle from the contemporary perspective of human rights movements? Of course, to invoke the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a marker of the birth of contemporary human rights consciousness will itself be an act of privileging the notion that human rights are essentially Western in their origins. Such a position, as we all know, has its own historic impact on practices of power in many a Third World society which valorise the discovery of their own cultural traditions emphasising duties and responsibilities over entitlements. The current cottage industry of philosophical critique of the very notion of basic human rights, not too curiously, aids and abets such practices of power.

◆

IS it possible to say that the nationalist struggle in India selectively reappropriated the liberal traditions of rights, as a resource for combating colonial/imperial domination? Would it be too much even to say that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a text co-authored among others, by the Indian nationalist pen? These questions await Foucauldian labours.

A related question of method is one of periodisation. One may periodise the study of rights movement in India by identifying charismatic/inaugural leaders or regimes. Or do we accomplish periodisation in relation to basic changes in the economy and polity? Or, further still, by combining the elements of the foregoing with the consciousness and solidarity—both in terms of enunciation of rights and praxis of implementation—at the global level? Any choice on this count will certainly predispose the narrative of the 'state' and human rights movements in India in a certain ineluctable direction.

In all these, decompostion of the semiotic entity "human rights" is constantly operative. For example, one hears of distinction between "civil liberties" and "democratic rights": "political rights" on the one hand, and "cultural, social, economic rights" on the other; rights of specially disadvantaged groups (the aged, children, indigenous peoples, women)

The author, an eminent Professor of Law, is at present the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Delhi. This article is the synopsis of the paper he presented at an international workshop on "Social Movements, State and Democracy" held at the Indian Statistical Institute, New Delhi on October 4-8, 1992 as part of Prof P.C. Mahalanobis' birth centenary celebrations.

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and rights of people as a whole (right of self-determination, and the recent UN Declaration on the Right to Development). We also see a steady emergence of concern, articulated by Karl Marx with the *species rights*—that is, collective rights of mankind to survival (perhaps the only justification for the emerging environmental rights, jurisprudence). The manner in which one wishes to privilege certain notions of rights will undoubtedly affect both analysis and the doing of history of rights and of state.

How do we deal with the problem of production of discursive truths in the narratives—whether global, national, or local—of rights-violation? The activist discourse produces an order of truths about violation which differs from the order of official truths. The collision between the truths of power and of resistance, of necessity, characterise the state-human rights movements' encounters. A prime task of human rights historiography in India would be to assess changes in patterns of discursivity. How far, for example, the institutional modes of production of official truths have been affected by change/discontinuities in the power of activist discursive practices? What resilience do these practices have? Or how does the politics of human rights movements in India impact upon national/State level politics? And by what indicators do we locate the impact of the former on the latter?

Even the raising of these issues of method runs the risk of being inaugural. Human rights communities are marked by, as we see later by a variety of actors, almost all of whom seem to have strong aversion to what remotely resembles 'theory' type concerns. This has generated a mounting loss in terms of anguished collective reflection and stocktaking. Perhaps, the activist aversion to 'theory' is wholly understandable, and some will say, despite the great examplarship of Marx, that disdain for rigorous analysis is even justified. What is *not* so easy of comprehension is the disregard of these issues by all those whose freely chosen avocation is political or social theory.

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IN what follows, I trace innovations in the rights-regime accomplished by the Indian Constitution and by a historic activist assertion of the judicial process and power, and identify some dilemmatic arenas in the life of state-human rights movements' interaction.

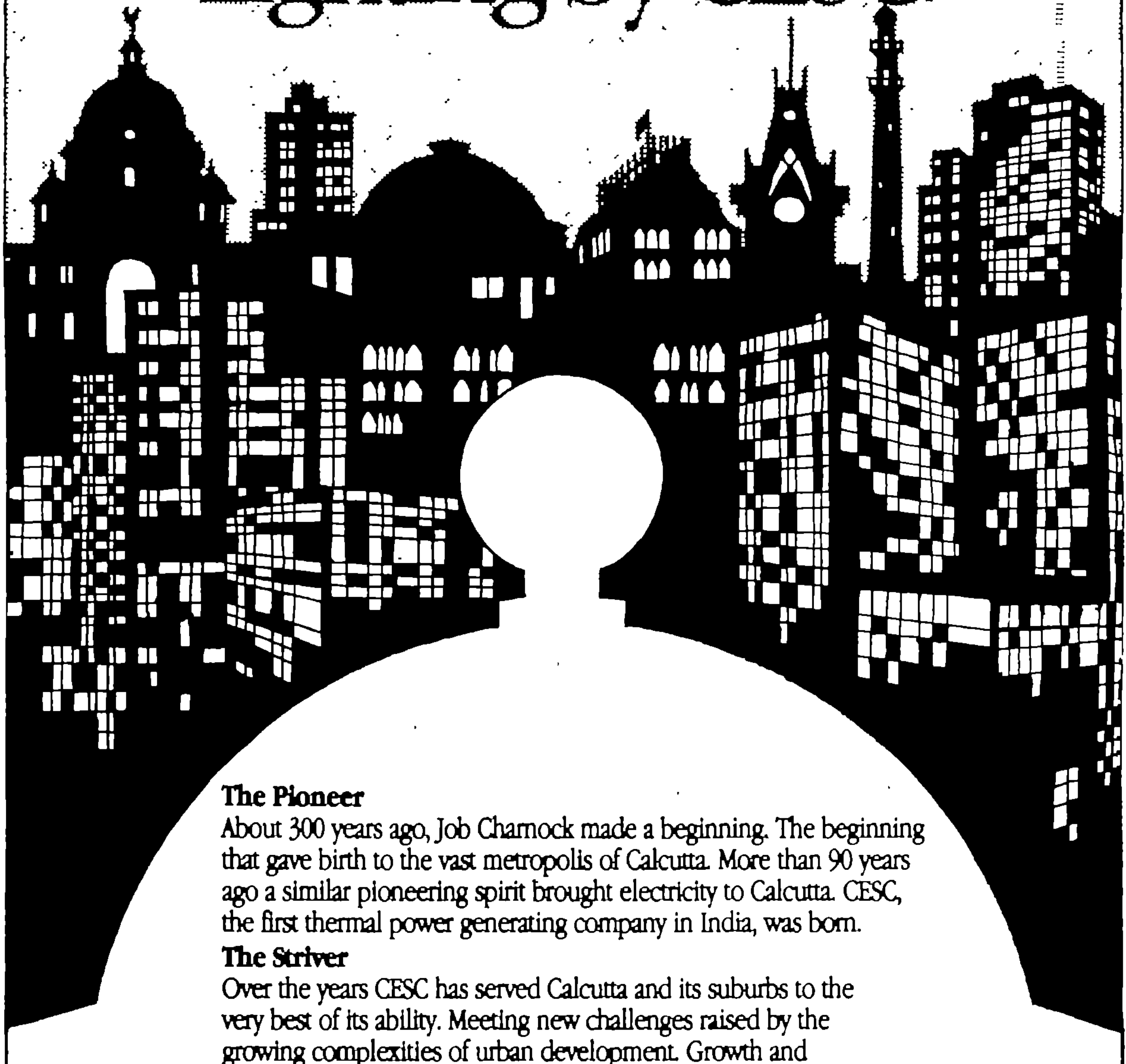
The "theory" of rights animating the Indian Constitution has at least three distinctive features. First, the Constitution distributes rights into judicially enforceable rights (Part III of the Constitution) and social and economic rights which the state must respect in law and policy-making as well as in governance (Part IV—the Directive Principles of State Policy). Second, in many respects the fundamental rights in Part III emerge not just as a corpus of limitations on the power of the state, guaranteeing state-free spaces for individual and collective life-projects, but also as an onslaught on intransigent attitude and behaviour in society and culture. In other words, through Article 17 (constitutional outlawry of untouchability) and Article 23 (constitutional proscription of many forms of agrestic serfdom and traffic in human beings) the Constitution directly addresses and confronts the dominant formation in civil society; the Indian Constitution is inaugural in the sense that it enhances the reach of fundamental rights beyond the state to civil society. Third, the Constitution is distinctively solicitous of solidary rights of linguistic, cultural and religious minorities.

These three innovative features, particularly the last two, recognise the possibility of what M. Foucault characterises as "illegalities of rights"—the third feature limits the scope of tyranny of majority assuring cultural autonomy of the minority groups, and the second feature seeks to arrest, at least normatively, intransigency of peoples' law formations. And the first feature, after three long decades of adjudicative discourse over the right to property in the context of agrarian reforms, has helped (even though too late) exorcise from the constitutional text fundamental rights to property, as well as to curb, at least until now, a variety of 'market' rights.

The task which was left unaccomplished by the authors of the Constitution in terms of the minimum entitlements of the large masses of the Indian impoverished has been followed up since the eighties—through social action litigation by the Supreme Court of India which through its corpus of activist jurisprudence has enunciated many new basic rights. Among the judicially created fundamental rights are the

— right to the dignity
— right to livelihood
— right to compensation and rehabilitation for injuries done or caused by state agents or agencies.
— right to speedy trial
— right to health
— right to education
— right to gender equality.

City by Job Charnock. Lighting by CESC.



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Of course, the education of new rights through the Apex Court does not signal any comprehensive achievement of these rights, given the not-too-readily subversible ingenuity of executive power. But it is nonetheless, remarkable that through the deft deployment of the relative autonomy of the judiciary from polity and market, the adjudicatory power differentiates itself as a form of state power, thus accentuating contradications within the hegemonic apparatuses of governance in India. In social action litigation, we find a whole new range of themes on which public discourse on the ethic of practices of power emerges.

And social action litigation is itself an extension of human rights and popular movements into state formative practices. The initiators of the social action litigation comprise a variety of activists, individuals and groups, supported by the media and the bar. In this sense, people participate, through activation and legitimation of adjudicatory power, in fashioning an expansive regime of rights converting the Supreme Court of India into a permanent Constituent Assembly of India, sculpting the nature and future of rights movement, steadily converting the Directive Principles of State Policy into judicially enforceable rights.

◆

AS I have analysed elsewhere (see U. Baxi, *The Indian Supreme Court and Politics*, 1980), judicial activism arose as an aspect of cathartic populism for the Supreme Court's own constraints of commission and omission during the internal Emergency of 1975-1976. But much of human rights activism also arose out of the middle-class 'radicalisation', out of the same experience of the collapse of state structures into legitimated arbitrariness in practices of power. Both the media and legal professions, as well as many other learned professions, who had taken a modicum of rule of law granted as a public good (despite the problem of free riders) suddenly found themselves as deprivileged as large sections of the impoverished since independence. Allround public energies were released to ensure that the Constitution does not remain a plaything of power, at least in ways which affect the privileged strata or 'classes. The judiciary emerged, especially the Supreme Court, through social action litigation as a new democratic icon. The Supreme Court began to hunt and haunt the nooks and crannies in the edifice of state power to locate sources of despotic arbitrariness and to curb and confine them; this saga of judicial valour affecting state formative practices awaits its own racounteur.

The fifteen year old innovation in state-ways has attracted its own dynamic of disenchantment and wearisomeness, and periodic critique of the betrayal of revolution of rising expectations. And yet despite all the limits of judicial powers and process, the Supreme Court of India, amongst all the institutions of governance remains, in the words of Justice Goswami, the "last refuge of the bewildered and oppressed". The Supreme Court of India has become the Supreme Court for Indians; it has been able to take rights seriously only because it has been, to some extent, able to take people's *suffering* seriously.

Human rights activists, naturally, have an ambivalent approach to high judicial power and discretion, enwombed as it is in the state. Their perceptions are shaped, despite democratisation of judicial access through simple letter petitions (what I call 'epistolary jurisdiction'), by their varied experience of efficacy/impact of judicial decisions on the structures of power. During years of struggle for the Bhopal victims, on the adjudicatory terrain, I myself experienced moments of disenchantment. And there is no assurance that these may not recur. But in any struggle for rights realisation, all search for such assurance is futile.

That apart, I am unmoved in my belief, shaped by overall assessment, that 476 (450 High Court justices and 26 Supreme Court justices) public policy-makers in India are destined in ways different than others (about 5500 odd legislators, and 15,000 top echelons of bureaucracy, police and paramilitary forces) to carry forward the task of sculpting the nature and future of Indian democracy. What the Western, notably American, critics of judicial power and process condemn as an anti-majoritarian, unrepresentative institution, has an extraordinary role potential in restoring minimal democratic virtues and values to practices of power in India. Indian human rights movements have yet to make this proposition a contested site, even as they, eclectically, invoke judicial power and process for their own noble ends. They need to remedy their insufficient appreciation of relative autonomy of adjudicatory state power as a resource for social and human rights movments, and to locate in the social/political history of comparable societies of South the salience, and resilience, of appellate judicial institutions in India, consistent with a searching critique of the judicial process, which I have myself included as a part of overall praxis.

◆

A marked ambivalence is also on display, among human rights movements and constituencies, concerning the executive and the legislature. State-bashing (state here being conceived as the supreme executive) is our favourite pastime but the uncomfortable question persists: "What do you say after saying 'Hello'!" (One Hindi equivalent of 'Hello' nowadays is "Hi-Hi" or "Down with...") It is here that we find a variety of antistate experiences, in the realm of rights.

One response is state/law/rights transcendent, embodied by Gandhian/Sarvodaya movements, which are endangered species in India, with the distinction perhaps that the species may have done much to periclitate itself! On this approach state/law are redundancies before the awakened social conscience and consciousness. The state undoubtedly exists but can be marginalised by 'truth-force', 'third-force', high-minded ethical fundamentalism, 'service-before-self' activism, a type of self-consuming artefact, through the practice of austerity and minimisation of wants. At one end it points to philosophical anarchism, at another, and in a related way, it valorises construction of moral community (or civil society) as a way of putting state/law in their place. The state/law as an immoral nuisance will undoubtedly seek to impinge on Gandhian renaissance, as happened in the bizarre case of the Kudal Commission which opened up for hostile gaze the management of Gandhian/Sarvodaya institutions, and patterns of resource raising and financial 'management' (how mean can the state get?). Making the state/law bizarre is a typical preoccupation of the spiritual heirs of Gandhiji in contemporary India. And it works well, as it did for Mohandas in relation to the colonial/imperial state, at times in contemporary India as well.

But the nihilism of the neo-Gandhians to state/law is different from that of Naxalite and neo-Naxalite jurisprudence, not just in the latter's valorisation of retributive violence as practice of insurgent politics but also in the critique of rights model/thesis. The Gandhians/neo-Gandhians have no serious discourse on rights, since rights do no belong to the genre and lexicon of superior moral good. In contrast, the Naxalite/neo-Naxalite critique of rights finds it, not altogether 'pure', genealogy in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme* and *On the Jewish Question*. Theirs is not a project of ameliorating the Indian state; their project is its demolition by revolutionary praxis, with strategies of sustainable violence. If strategies or tactics demand a recourse to rights languages (as in manipulating the contingencies of state/law in the Draconian dragnet 'security' legislation or fake encounters), it is luminously clear to them, and their next best friends, that what is being practiced is the motto: "All is fair in love and war". (Incidentally, this expression has always puzzled me because love is, *fortunately*, after Rousseau's valiant attempt at distinction between 'romantic' and official or 'moral' love, has been insufficiently 'theorised' in human sciences!)

◆

AT the mid-point of the spectrum thus delineated lies the human rights activism of the troubled Indian bourgeoisie, where most human rights movements have their inescapable class location. The Indian state often thinks through them, even when they remain convinced of their anti-state predispositions. Avoidance of 'statolatry' is their first postulate; aggressive competitiveness in condemning practices of power is a sound governing guideline and again naturally so; fear of, and resistance to, cooptation by the state is their third, and again rightly so, animating passion. But at the end of the day activism is consumed by negotiating state/law/rights. But not without profound dilemmas.

The first dilemma centres upon the empowerment/disempowerment dialectic. In order to combat regressive forces (take your pick to instantiate—this 'communalism', 'sati', gender-based descrimination, child labour) one needs to enhance the powers of an interventionist state. But to empower the state by activist praxis, even in pursuit of rights, is deeply disturbing; surely, it can't be the project of human rights activism to empower a Leviathan! Traditionally, the mission of such activism is to *disempower* the state, to create state-free spaces for individuals, groups, communities. But insistence on a *disempowering* approach is unproductive of struggle against dispersed power of people's law-formations, some of which strike at the roots of rights. Encounters between human rights activism and the Indian state presents a series of manipulation of contingencies. This is ineluctable; but the legitimacy problem for activism seems to grow apace insofar as the legitimating principle has in the mastery of suspicion about the state's evil designs on human freedoms and rights. What other basis of 'legitimation' (an old problematic for human rights movements) may we find instead?

At a recent dialogue in Delhi (under the auspices of the People's Union of Civil Liberties) the problem of 'legitimacy' of human rights, astonishingly, surfaced and there was even some talk of the need for human rights communities to "woo the middle classes" back to the value/mission, of languages of rights. Not too long ago (I add this by way of reminder), many leading human rights communities critiqued, rightly (prescinding the question of moral opportunism in practice of politics), the middle-class support to the anti-Mandal agitation on the foundational principles of equitable social transformation. How shall we package, recommoditise, rights languages in market-friendly ways? This seems to be an important question in some human rights quarters in India today.

A second dilemma pertains to the question: what shall we do with the sonorous enunciation of constitutional values? This is particularly acute with some leading social theorists/colleauges who in the wake of Shah Bano legislative reversal were very articulate on the foundational value of 'secularism' but now feel harrassed by the fact that secularism is an alien, unworkable, futureless metaphor, which politicians harness to their own ends (as if they could ever do otherwise!) and find a way of *somehow* invoking traditions of interfaith tolerance, discovered to be the hallmark of the Indian culture and civilisation.

The politics of nihilism, in a Nietazschean sense, makes us revert to a pre-Constitution Indian past, which was visited with a mayhem by the insertion or imposition, of culture-bound, history-laden, concepts from the "West". This kind of 'critique' raises not merely critical questions concerning the lineage of languages of human rights but also marks the erosion of rights 'fundamentalism' to combat other kinds of—majority or minority—'fundamentalism'.

The same dilemma arises, and persists, in what to do with the constitutionally mandated scheme of derogation from the egalitarian principles for educational, employment, and legislative reservations for the Scheduled Castes (a caste created by a secular caste—assaulting the Indian Constitution!), Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes outside again the arena of polemical condemnation of self-interested practices of power (as if these could be otherwise).

A third dilemma relates to amelioration of state institutions. On this issue, the evidence is at least unimpeachable. Human rights communities in India have surrendered the opportunities they have had to reform state institutions. They have failed to organise campaigns around, for example:

the National Police Commission Reports towards making Indian police democratically oriented;
the Mulla Committee Report on prison reforms;
the Law Commission's recommendation that the burden of proof for death in police custody must initially shift to the police to show that death occurred due to natural causes;
India's derogation from the civil and political rights convention for compensation to victims of torture, cruel or unusual treatment or punishment.

◆

ALL these matters have been before us for more than a decade. And despite repeated solicitation of attention of human rights communities, no supportive public opinion/pressure group campaigns have yet been launched. Nor does one witness similar campaigns for worker and community safety, against predator multinationals in a post-Bhopal India. Nor, further, is there organised engagement in demand formation for the state deference to progressive judgements of the Supreme Court of India on the rights of the dispossessed, disadvantaged and deprived millions of India.

How does one explain this? By recourse to the hypothesis that the troubled bourgeoisie of India, including the human rights communities, is as yet insufficiently historically troubled? Or insufficiently formed bourgeoisie? Or, as I often put it, is it a situation of libidinal fascination with the pathology of power, which is seen as a germinating force for the very existence of human rights communities? Or, in a related way, by a formative anxiety in nascent human rights consciousness/organisation that reformation of state may pose a setback to their growth and development? I do not know the answers to these questions; but, in the present state of play, as I am learning by experience, even raising these questions seems to invite agitated attempts at censorship by some human rights communities and activists. Regardless of such contingencies, the code of censorship opprobrium and even exile operative in human rights communities may begin to bear, if we are not vigilant, a family resemblance to that of the state.

Internal, friendly, and co-suffering interrogation of the direction and contours of human rights movements in India is disvalued, perhaps for cogent reasons of protection of fragile emergent com-

(Continued on page 58)

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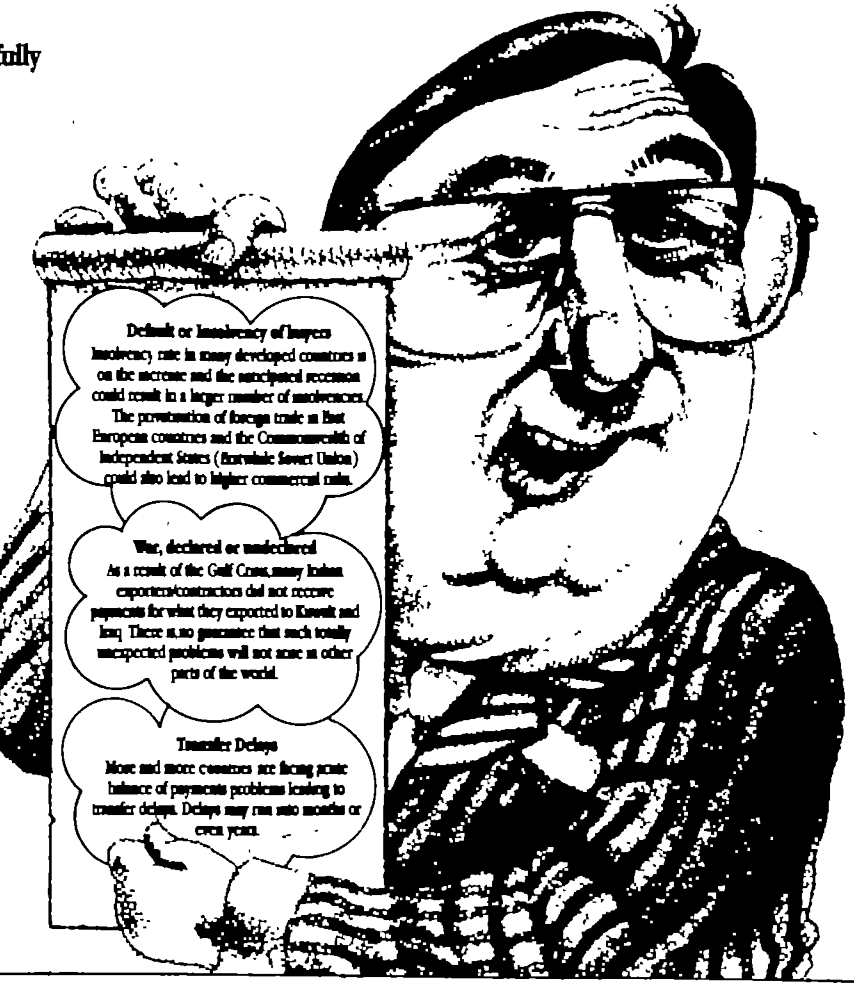

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In Tribute to the South's Golden Age

SURENDRA J. PATEL

Then Prometheus gave wisdom, which is strength,
to Jupiter...
And he tamed fire which like beast of prey,
Most terrible, but lovely, played beneath
The frown of man; and tortured to his will
Iron and gold...

He gave man speech, and speech created thought,
Which is the measure of the universe;
And Science struck the thrones of earth and
heaven,
Which shook, but fell not...
He told the hidden power of herbs and springs,
And Disease drank and slept. Death grew like
sleep..

To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;
To love, and bear; to hope, till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates...
Percy B. Shelley, Prometheus Unbound, *1817*

There is an air of despair allround. The East and the West have now joined the South[1] in a crisis which has become truly universal. But the crisis is the most severe for the South which is burdened by heavy debts, declining terms of trade, mounting deficits, reverse transfer of resources to the North, and negative or zero growth. Structural adjustment, whether masked by a human face or not, is leading to a sharp worsening of conditions of life for the hungry, the poor, the disadvantaged—women, children, and the homeless.

The prophets of "doom and gloom" are now riding high. Their loud wailings are drowning the flicker of hope the South may have for its future. They are beginning to wipe out even the memory of what the South collectively achieved in the four decades since 1950. The clock of history has already pushed into the past the story of these decades. It is on the verge of being forgotten.

The achievements of those decades are a story without parallel in world development history. It tells of the South bettering the 80-year record of the North's nineteenth century (1820-1900) advance. The South did this in half the time, at twice the growth rates, and with five times the North's population in the nineteenth century. It even excelled the North's rapid pace during 1950-90. This record is truly remarkable. Hence this essay pays a tribute to that Golden Age of the South's development, to honour these decades lest they are forgotten.

Dr Patel is a Visiting Professor at Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia and the Sardar Patel Institute of Economic and Social Research, Ahmedabad. This article appeared in Great Britain in World Development, *Vol. 20, No. 5, 1992 (from where it is being reproduced).*

The essay begins with a brief review of nineteenth century Europe's advance, which could serve as a frame reference for the South. The next section takes up the post-War expectations for the South's development. These are then contrasted with the actual economic and social advance of the South during 1950-90. The concluding section suggests that we can perhaps look back to the South's past and forward to its future, with hope—as Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, cited above, did for Europe.

EUROPE'S ADVANCE SINCE 1820

The nineteenth century was the age of hope and progress for Europe. We will begin with a review of Europe's advance during this period so that it can then be compared with what the South achieved later. To catch the temper of the times, we turn to the setting of Rome in 1817. Shelley, just 26, had come to Rome leaving behind the fog and rain of England.

The long, bloody Napoleonic Wars had come to an end. Its dead were counted and buried. Europe beginning all over again to hope. The Industrial Revolution, the promise of progress, was in full swing. The Roman spring was an intoxicating inspiration for Shelley, the romantic, unrepentant reformer. His creativity was at its height. A few weeks of intense composition, and his most passionate lyric drama, *Prometheus Unbound*, with Asia as Prometheus' beloved, was born. It was the opening salvo in his salute to the dawn of the springtime of humanity.

Beethoven too was inspired by the new winds. In tones ringing with hope, he composed his "Overture to Prometheus". Two of the greatest artists of Europe, Shelley and Beethoven, had pulled the curtain down on the past and sung of their hopes for the times to come.

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Most Europeans were poor, ill-fed, ill-housed, ill-clad, and illiterate. Standards of living had improved only somewhat since the eighteenth century. Thomas Hobbes' comment on his own times still generally applied to Shelley and Beethoven's era:

> No arts, no letters, no society; and which is worst of all, continued fear of and danger of violent death: and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.[2]

Reform Acts were far away. Slavery had not been abolished. Technological advance had spread only to textiles and steam. Railways, steamships, diesel and electric motors, new medical discoveries, organic chemistry, universal adult franchise, and free, universal and compulsory education—all these and many other embodiments of progress—were far away. European lives were firmly anchored in the past. The amenities the Europeans now take for granted did not exist a dozen decades ago. Progress then was but a dream, a hard-to-believe hope.

Since Shelley wrote, the North has changed beyond recognition. Slavery and serfdom have been abolished. Kings and tyrants have been overthrown. Democratisation has spread far and wide. Disease has been put to sleep, as Shelley said. Death rates have dropped. The Northerners are now healthier. They have grown on average four inches taller. Life expectancy has gradually risen. Illiteracy has been all but eliminated. There are now more students in the North's universities and institutions of higher learning than in its primary schools in Shelley's day. The magic of electricity lights citizens' lives. When the sun sets, darkness no longer dominates.

There is no simple way to measure the scale of this advance. We may employ here the greatest invention in economics of the early twentieth century. Drawing upon the work of King and Clark, Kuznets had perfected the system of national accounts. It could chart the growth of a nation's gross domestic product (GDP) over time. It could express its total and per capita income in simple figures. There are many deficiencies in these numbers, but this is not the place to delve into this issue.[3]

In the century and a half since 1820, the North's total GDP increased 40-50 times, and its per capita GDP 12-15 times. In comparison, as Keynes had remarked, per capita productivity could have at the utmost doubled in the 4000 years ending in 1700;[4] and its increase by 1820 could not have been more than 50 per cent. There were too many violent ups and downs, but little steady and sustained advance. In sharp contrast the advance since 1820 was spectacular and unprecedented, as described by Kuznets in his study, *Modern Economic Growth.*[5]

The advance was not orderly. This fact is too often overlooked, or even forgotten. There were many economic ups and downs, many cycles. There were three long economic crises—in the second and the last quarters of the nineteenth century, and in the period between WWI and WWII. There were also some 15 depressions and nearly 40 recessions. Schumpeter distinguished them by the names of the authors who identified them—Kondratiefs, Juglars and Kitchins.[6]

There were wars, big and small, among the small states of Europe. There were also wars of colonial conquest. There was much destruction of men and means. All these economic and military disturbances notwithstanding, the engine of Europe's advance rolled on relentlessly.

The 80-year advance of Europe during 1820-1900 may be even more relevant for comparison with the South's. For then, the nations of the North were all newly industrialising countries, the unrecognised NICs of the nineteenth century. (They did not know then that that is what they really were. The title was to be invented in the post-WWII period to single out a few ministates from the rest of the South.) Great Britain, the pioneer of the Industrial Revolution, was joined by a succession of newcomers: Belgium and France in the 1820s; Germany, the United States, Canada, Denmark in the 1860s; Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands, Italy, Japan and Russia in the 1890s.

In the nineteenth century too, as now, development did not begin in all countries at the same time. It was uneven among countries and over time. Each new entrant standing on the shoulders of those who started earlier, demonstrated its learning prowess by attaining a progressive acceleration in its rate of growth.

What did the North achieve in these 80 years? This can be expressed in simple overall terms. The North's total GDP rose about six times in these years, growing at about 2.2 per cent per year—lower for the first 40 years, and higher for the second. Its real per capita GDP expanded 2.7 times, increasing at 1.25 per cent per year.

These achievements richly deserved all the tributes they received, then as well as later. For they were until then simply unprecedented. Hobsbawm called that period The Age of Capital".[7] Over a hundred years earlier, Marx and Engels had welcomed the rule of capital in the most glowing terms:

> During its rule of a scarce one hundred years, [it] has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together.[8]

POST-WAR DESPAIR FOR THE SOUTH

The North has always had an underlying despair for the South. But that is not really even a North-

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CHIMANBHAI PATEL
Chief Minister, Gujarat State

South phenomenon. The industrialised have generally dismissed the abilities of the industrialising, their potential rivals. Moreover, when the industrialising do industrialise, the industrialised have a hard time accommodating, let alone welcoming, the newcomers on the world stage. A mixture of arrogance, fear and jealously must be responsible for such attitudes.

These prejudices were all too visible in the British comments on German products exhibited at the Great Exhibition, the First World Fair, held in London in 1851. The lead article in the special Exhibition Supplement of a famous British journal ridiculed the low level of division of labour (beginning where Adam Smith began) among the Germans: their products were trivial uniform, imitative. The article then concluded:

> What they exhibit gives a painful impression of an emasculated industry... Such an exhibition like their toys, is better adapted to children and the vulgar than to mature and enlightened beings.[9]

The comments on Japanese products and management in the early phase of its industrialisation were similar if not more brutal, particularly on the competence of its management. An Australian expert invited by the Japanese Government in 1915 stated:

> Inferior goods, irregularity and indifferent shipments have caused no end of worry...First class managers are required to wake things up and get out of the go-as-you-please style that seems universal at present.[10]

In these respects, the South has probably suffered even more. Most of its countries were colonies, being "civilised" by the European empire builders. A disdainful attitude on the Europeans' part was to be expected. Even within the South, there were conservatives who hankered for the days of colonial rule.

The skepticism on the South's ability to develop following decolonisation spread to more respectable levels—even to academics, Pessimism was universal. Hope itself was crippled. Literature on the South's failures, disasters, crises, and inabilities mushroomed. When the South was in gloom, its "developers" were in bloom. When the South was in bloom, they sang of its impending doom.

Their skepticism has too often bordered on worries, concern, even on despair. The development profession in general has been much more at ease when the South was in crisis. It could then analyse, diagnose, prescribe and describe. Professional reputations were built in such times. A few examples may be cited for illustrative purposes.

The tone for what the South could do was set as early as 1951. The United Nations had an important provision in the Preamble to its Charter. It called for employment of international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all people. A major step in this direction was the convening of the first United Nations Expert Group to propose measures for the development of the countries of the South.[11]

In its report, *Measures for the Economic Development of Underdeveloped Regions* (United Nations, 1951), the Expert Group struggled with estimates of investment and financing needed for raising employment and output in agriculture and industry in the South (including China). It concluded that the South needed a *net* investment in these two sectors of $19.1 billion, which was equal to about 20 per cent of the South's estimated national income of $96.6 billion in 1949. Since these poor underdeveloped countries were caught in the vicious circle of poverty, quite in vogue then, it was considered impossible for them to save such a large amount. Net domestic savings for the South as a whole were at that time estimated to be only $5.2 billion, or about five per cent of the South's national incomes.

The Marshall Plan for the reconstruction and recovery of War-devastated countries in Europe was an ideal model. Why not call upon the developed countries to assist the South? At least one-half of the needed investments the Group recommended would have to be financed from the outside. Domestic savings, it was hoped, would be raised from five to 10 per cent of national income to cover the rest.

The only possible funding source in those years was the United States. The task was to convince the United States to furnish such aid. The Experts Group therefore concerned itself with the benefits that could be achieved when these investments were undertaken. But its response on this point was rather cagey. Its conclusion is a classic illustration of asking too much to achive to little. The Group concluded:

> We guess that with the national income increaseing annually by $2^{1}/_{2}$ per cent as a result of the assumed investment, and with population increasing at $1^{1}/_{4}$ per cent, the per capita income [in the South *might rise by about $2^{1}/_{2}$ per cent.* (emphasis added)[12]

The real per capita growth following from the Expert Group's calculations would have been only 1.25 per cent (2.5 per cent income growth minus 1.25 per cent population growth), and not about two per cent as the Expert Group stated. The lower figure (1.25 per cent) implicit in the Group's calculations, it was thought, was too low—attractive neither to the donors nor to the South. The Expert Group simply raised it. Fortunately for the Group's conclusions, the much higher estimates of population growth—two per cent or more per year—were not then available to the Expert Group. If they had been available, the Expert Group's estimates of the expected per capita income would have been near zero. What a large effort for so little an achivement!

The Expert Group was not disturbed that its recommended *net* investment of 20 per cent of the national income of the South (which could amount to a *gross* investment of some 27-30 per cent) was to yield a mere 2.5 per cent growth of overall national output. The implicit net capital/output ratio was 8:1; and the probable gross capital/output ratio would be 12:1. The Group was not concerned about how the US Congress could be persuaded to allocate as much as three per cent of US national income to the South.[13] In comparison the Marshall Plan absorbed some two per cent of its GDP. But then, those were heady days for development. Now, we are better informed about development economics. Such fantasies of high capital/output ratios and external aid and such a juggling of figures would not now be enterained at even an economics undergraduate level.

This was also the period when India prepared its First Five Year Development Plan. The Plan would later act as a model for many other South countries. It too was coloured by current thinking about the incapability of the poor countries to develop rapidly. It therefore set the overall target of India's economic growth at a very modest 2.1 per cent per year.

To give a flavour of the times in the 1950s and early 1960s, I cite here the views of Lewis and Kuznets, both Nobel Prize winners. Lewis writing in the late 1950s, concluded that a growth rate of "4% is so difficult to obtain that it is really quite an ambitious target".[14]

Twenty years later, however, he was to ridicule those who had argued earlier that the poor countries simply could not grow fast:

> In 1950 these people were secptical of the capacity of LDCs to grow rapidly because of inappropriate attitudes, institutions or climates. The sun was too hot to work, or the people too spendthrift, the government too corrupt, the fertility rate too high, the religion too other-worldly, and so on. This kind of analysis has now almost completely gone from the literature.[15]

In his classic study *Modern Economic Growth* (1966), most of which was ready in draft by late 1950s, Kuznets stressed in general the advantages of the latecomers to industrialisation. But when he came to the underdeveloped countries, he was worried by the adverse influence of two factors: the very existence of the North, its policies and its economic dominance over the South, and the constraints of the traditional social structures of the South. He therefore concluded:

> ...we find it difficult to avoid the judgement that the orientation of the under-developed countries of today... must contain many elements that are inconsistent with, hence obstacles to, modern economic growth.[16]

By the 1970s, such pessimism was on the way out—for a while. The South had quite well by then—indeed much better than what Lewis and Kuznets had earlier expected. They too reflected the new mood of the 1970s. Receiving the Nobel Prize, Lewis stated:

> I think the LDCs have demonstrated beyond doubt their ability to use physical and human resources productively.[17]

Kuznets had an occasion to review the 22-year (1950-72) growth experience of the South. The per capita growth rates in the South, he found, were quite high in the long term perspective of both less developed countries and the developed countries. Bewildered by the persistent negative reporting on the South by journalists as well as most academics, he then asked:

> If growth rates in the per capita product of the LDCs over almost a quarter of a century were impressively high, one may ask why the reaction to them in the general flow of news about these countries in the persistent concern about critical conditions with respect to supplies of economic goods, seems to ignore these growth achievements. [He wondered] why no litanies of praise [were sung] for these economic miracles... Instead, there were only references to dangers of collapse in the Third World.[18]

The earlier despair about the "dangers of collapse in the South" began to give way. The performance of some of the South countries started to be described as economic miracles"—in Brazil, South Korea, China, even on occasion Pakistan.

We may close by citing the view of Streeten *et al.* (1981). They considered the post-War development record of the Third World a "spectacular, unprecedented and unexpected success".[19] Spectacular and unprecedented it was indeed. But the last adjective—"unexpected"—underlined how ill-prepared the profession of development economics was for the impressive economic performance by the South, described below.

THE SOUTH'S ECONOMIC SPRINT SINCE 1950

We may begin with the setting in the 1950s. India had just become independent. China soon followed with its liberation. These events greatly strengthened the incipient national liberation struggles throughout the colonies. Empires much larger than ever known in the past crumbled in a few years. The colonies liberated themselves. New countries were born. New governments were established. People's aspirations were high. Their visions reached out beyond the distant horizon.

We may now summarise the main economic advances achieved by the South during 1950-90. There was, of course, unevenness among countries in their rates of advance. An analysis of this unevenness is critical for identifying its causes and working out new strategies according to the specific requirements of each country. But this is not the main concern here. We are simply presenting the broad sweep of change in the South as a whole.

(a) Overall Economic Growth

The actual development record of the South contrasted sharply with what most had expected of it in the 1950s. During 1950-80, the South raised its overall output at an annual average of 5.3 per cent and per capita output at about three per cent. During the 30 years from 1950, the combined GDP of all South countries increased 4.7 times, and per capita GDP 2.4 times.

These three decades during 1950-80 were the most remarkable period in the one-century history of economic development. World output and trade expanded at unparalleled rates. As shown in Table1, both the eastern and western regions of the North and the South participated in this worldwide wave. The tidal wave of growth also embraced the South, until then bypassed by past development.

With the slowing of the world economy in the 1980s, the development scene changed radically. There was a general decline in growth rates for all the major groups of countries. The rate for the South fell sharply—from 5.3 per cent during 1950-80, to only 3.8 per cent for 1980-87. Preliminary estimates for the next three years suggest that the average may well be about the same as for 1980-87 (about 3.8 per cent) or some 30 per cent below that of the preceding three decades.[20]

Table 1

*Population and real GDP and its growth in the South and the North: 1950-85**

	Population in millions 1985	GDP in billions $ 1985	Annual growth of GDP in % 1950-80	1980-87
The South	3650	2500	5.3	3.8
China & India	1835	560	5.3+	8.6
The North	1190	-	-	-
West	790	8800	4.2	2.3++
East	400	-	6.0	3.4++
World	4840	11,300	4.4	2.8

Sources: Data up to 1980 and for 1980-85 for West and East from UNCTAD (1987), Supplement, Tables 6.1 and 6.2; other post-1980 figures based on data in World Bank (1988), pp. 2, 23, 189, 224.

*Data on Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union excluded from World and North GDP and its rate of growth. Population and GDP data rounded to the nearest zero.

+ 1965-80.

++ 1980-85.

National output in several countries in crisis (for example, Bolivia, Nigeria, Venezuela, Zambia) fell during the 1980s by as much as 25-40 per cent, equalling declines which were experienced only during the Great Depression. World Bank data for 1980-86 show that overall GDP declined in 17 countries. In 41 countries, the average growth was below three per cent indicating that per capita real output must have fallen in most of these countries. The scope of the crisis is underlined by the fact that out of 87 developing countries for which data are reported by the World Bank, the per capita GDP actually declined in 58 countries.[21] After a brief honeymoon with optimism, despair for the South was back in business—with a vengeance.

Yet taking the four decades since 1950 together, the South's total GDP had increased at about 4.9 per cent per year, and per capita GDP at 2.7 per cent. By 1990, its total real output had thus expanded 6.8 times and per capita GDP some 2.9 times over the 1950 levels. Not so bad, one would say.

(b) An Assessment of the South's Economic Advance

The current concentration on the crisis facing the South has been responsible for obscuring the scale of the South's achievements. Crisis mongers have had a field day. Pessimists have turned into prophets. The crisis is indeed critical for the future of the South. The crisis should, nonetheless, be kept in perspective. Is it really as grave as the Great Depression of the inter-War period or the Long Depression in the last quarter of the nineteenth century? By any stretch of imagination can its gravity be placed next to WWI and WWII?

I will attempt here a broad assessment of the South's achievement during 1950-90 using several yardsticks: (i) the needs of the South; (ii) plan targets of individual Third World countries; (iii) the past performance of these countries; and (iv) comparison with growth of the North during the post-War period and its historic transformation in the more than 100 years since 1870 (including past achievements of a few individual countries of the North).

Points (i) and (ii) can be dealt with together rather briefly. The South's achievements since 1950 were certainly lower than what it needed for significantly raising its people's well-being. In most cases they were also lower than the plan targets of individual countries.

A comparison with the South's past performance would, however, present a very different picture.

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During 1890-1950 the South's per capita development for the group as a whole could not have been higher than 0.5 per cent per year.[22] Most evidence suggests that it was lower. Two of the largest countries in the South were stagnant or declining. China was shattered by a destructive, protracted civil war. India's growth did not keep pace even with its population increase.[23] Other countries had an uneven record. In some small countries, there was a limited development of plantation products and minerals, mostly for supplying the growing requirements of the North. In others, there was either stagnation or decline.

We may even suggest by a little statistical exercise that the South's real per capita growth during 1950-90 might be regarded as equal, or perhaps even superior to its experience over the long stretch of 3000-4000 years of its past history. To illustrate, we may extrapolate backward to 1950 the South's average real per capita income of $685 in 1985. Since it increased 2.5 times during 1950-85, its real level in 1950 would have been, for example, $275 in 1985 prices.

We may now imagine, for illustration, that the South countries had succeeded in raising their per capita incomes at least 2.5 times over the 3000-4000 years of their history—or by about the same proportion as during the 35 years during 1950-85. In that case, incomes would have been at the initial point of this long journey no more than $110 in 1985 prices.

But according to the World Bank data, there was only one country (Ethiopia) which in 1986 had a per capita GDP of $120, a level which could then be taken as the minimum for simple human survival. Below this level, survival would be impossible. We could then take $120 real per capita output as the minimum for survival—a level which is slightly higher than our (derived) estimate of the South's per capita income at the dawn of its history. Above that minimum were the fruits of progress, passing through many ups and downs, as the fortunes of individual civilisation rose and fell, and as the centres of culture shifted from place to place over time.

Looked at this way, the South's recent overall achievement—a 2.5 times rise in real per capita output—would equal the maximum advance the South countries could have made over their long past. That it was attained in just 40 years gives us a measure of its significance. One need not rush to read absolute precision in these figures. They do, however, underline that the South's record of economic growth during 1950-90 was indeed impressive. It needs no apology.

As for point (iv), we may now compare the South's recent achievement with the long-term development of the North. Based on Maddison's data for the combined growth of 16 North countries during 1870-1986, it can be concluded that the historical growth rate of the North for these 116 years was some 2.7 per cent per year for total GDP, and 1.7 per cent for per capita GDP.[25]

The South's achievement may also be compared with growth at selected periods in a few individual developed countries. Van Duijn's data on industrial output for several countries for the 1870s to 1890s show that it grew at 1.3 per cent in France, 1.7 per cent in Great Britain, 2.9 per cent in Germany, 3.1 per cent in Sweden, and 4.7 per cent in the United States.[26] It is a general feature of early economic growth that industry expands at a rate faster than overall GDP. The South's recent record would then seem to be superior to that in these North countries. We may also compare the South's rate of growth with that of Japan's-GDP expanded at a little less than three per cent per year during this period.[27] This was two-thirds of the rate achieved by the South as a whole during 1950-90.

What do all these comparisons mean? They show that the growth rate (5.3 per cent) achieved by the South during 1950-80 was unparalleled in the history of the economic growth of nations. Moreover, this high average growth rate was maintained for 30 years. The South was a big, indeed a very big group. Its 130 countries accounted for 3.65 billion people in 1985. In comparison, the North's population, when it began its development in the nineteenth century, was very small—barely 300 million.

The advance of the South as a whole was indeed the most sustained and widespread development "miracle" of the twentieth century, perhaps of all history.

Moreover, we must not forget that the South has been treated here as a whole. Achievements of individual countries varied very widely. Some did very well and some pretty poorly. Eight countries attained an annual growth of 6.5 per cent sustained for 30 years during 1950-80. They raised their total GDP 8-15 times, and their per capita GDP 4-8 times. Their combined population was 1.3 billion, or twice that of the developed West. Thus, the miracle-makers were not just the so-called four baby tigers. In reality, the elephants in the South too had begun to learn the tiger's sprint. Some people have been too myopic to notice this.

The process also brought about significant structural transformations in the South:

- an increase in urban population and decline in the rural;

- a decline of the share of agriculture from 40 per cent in 1950 to only 17 per cent of total output in 1980;
- a corresponding increase in the share of industry from 16 per cent in 1950 to 36 per cent in 1980;
- an unprecedented expansion in the share (and real volume, of course) of resources devoted to capital formation and development and public—from 10-15 per cent of total output in 1950 to 35-40 per cent in 1980;
- a corresponding decline in the share of consumption;
- a significant change in the composition of exports leading to a decline in the share of primary product; and
- an increase in the share of manufactures in both exports and imports.

These forms of structural differentiation within the South followed from its accelerated development, described earlier. They merit a much closer examination and analysis. But this is not the place for it.[28]

STILL MORE SPECTACULAR SOCIAL ADVANCE

The South's economic achievements were impressive. But people do not live by bread alone. The advance in the social field, as has been graphically shown by M. Patel in his recent study prepared for UNICEF, was still more spectacular.[29] We will focus upon the achievements in health and education, which serve both as goals and means of development.

There is no single indicator which can be used to measure advance in health. Data on the decline in fant mortality rates (IMRs) and death rates in general and on the increase in life expectancy may be used as broad proxy indicators. Death rates in the South have fallen from 25-30 per thousand in the 1950s to 10-15 in the 1980s. Several countries, including China, have brought them below 10, or not much different from the level of 7-10 current in the North.

The IMR in the low-income countries only 40 years ago was as high as 200 per thousand—about the same as the rate in the North in the mid-nineteenth century. In just 36 years, the South brought it down to 70 by 1986, or equal to the 1940 level in the North. The 100-year process in the North was telescoped into less than 40 years in the South. Infant mortality rates in the North ranged around 30 per thousand in 1960. Eighteen South countries with a combined population of 1.15 billion had reached this range by 1986. It may be expected that by the year 2000, the IMR in 20 low-income countries will be 20-30, or about the same as the 1980 level in Europe.

The decline in death rates and infant mortality rates is reflected in higher life expectancy (LE) in the South. LE rose from around or below 40 years in 1950 to 60 years or over by the mid-1980s. Twenty years were added to the average life of a citizen of the South. In several South countries, LE has already reached 70 years, only a few years below the average in the North. LE for females increased even more than males nearly everywhere in the South.

The advance in education was also spectacular. We begin with literacy rates.[30] In the mid-nineteenth century, literacy rates in the North ranged from about 60 per cent in England and the United States to a low of 20 per cent in Spain, 10 per cent in Italy and even lower in the rest of Southern Europe. The average in the North could not have been above 25 per cent in 1850 and 50 per cent in 1900.[31] The comparable level in the South was about 30 per cent in 1950. But by the 1980s, it had risen to 50 per cent in Africa, 70 per cent in Asia and 80 per cent in Latin America.

The North of 1960 had 56 per cent of the world total gross number of literate persons (GNLP) with only 44 per cent for the South.[32] By 1985, the South's share had risen to 69 per cent and that of the North had shrunk to 31 per cent. It should be noted that male literates accounted for a much larger share than female literates—a feature which is still crying out to be altered.

In the 35 years during 1950-85, education in the South sprinted ahead. Total enrollment at all levels rose from some 90 million to 684 million. One-fifth of the entire population of the South was attending some kind of school the comparable ratio in 1950 was as low as one-sixteenth. Primary school enrollment became nearly universal—rising from only 80 million in 1950 to 475 million by 1985. Secondary school enrollment rose from 10 million in 1950, or under one-third in the North, to 184 million in 1985, or twice that in the North.

The advance in enrollment in universities and institutions of higher learning was unprecedented from under one million in 1950 to nearly 25 million in 1985. The South as a whole had in 1950 less than one-fifth the tertiary enrollment of the North. By 1985, the ration had shot up to 5:6—or almost equalling the North. In this sprint, female enrollment was much lower than the male one but even the gender gap was narrowing.

Here are extraordinary advances. In the process the North-South educational distance narrowed significantly. In 1950 the South was behind the North by 60-70 years in primary enrollment and 40-50 years in secondary and higher enrollment. By mid 1980s, the South had on a per capita enrollment basis equalled (or surpassed) the comparable developed-country level in primary education, because of a larger relevant age group. It had reached mid-1950 developed-country levels in secondary education and nearly attained the 1950 enrollment levels of tertiary education in the developed countries.

Table 2
Educational advance in the South, 1950-85

	South		North		Ratio South/North	
	1950	1985	1950	1985	1950	1985
I.Enrollment (mil.)						
Primary	80	475	110	105	0.7	4.5
Secondary	10	184	31	88	0.3	2.1
Tertiary	1	25	5	31	0.2	0.8
Total	91	684	146	224	0.6	3.1
II.Enrollment per thousand population						
Primary	49.0	125.0	149.0	95	0.3	1.3
Secondary	6.0	48.0	41.0	79	0.1	0.6
Tertiary	0.6	6.6	7.2	23	0.1	0.3

Sources: Patel, S. (1985a), pp.1312-1317; Patel, M. (1989), Tables 1.1 and 1.2, pp. 23,25.

There are, to be sure, many shortcomings in the quality of education imparted, and in related areas. But the sheer size of the numbers involved is simply staggering.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

Here are monumental achievements—both economic and social—by the South. But contemporary history has simply disregarded them. Our aim here was to set the historical record straight. Whatever may be the nature of the current crisis in the South and its outcome in the years to come, one fact stands out in the post-War development experience.

Neither in the rate nor in the scope is there a parallel in history for the South's achievements during 1950-90 No prophet of doom and gloom can detract from this record.

It seems as if the vast masses of the South have been climbing upward in a virtuous growth spiral in the post-WWII period. They have written an obituary of the vicious circle of poverty, that is, people are poor because they are too poor to save enough to invest in their growth. The South was poor, and yet it saved, invested and grew!

In concluding this discussion it may be noted that if there were ever a golden age of growth. The star performers in it were the vast populations of the South. They outperformed both their own past and that of the North. The South has by this act left behind the theatre of the absurd and legitimately entered the world stage.

The current crisis has spread gloom and despair. There are yet miles to go. There are too many poor people in the South. The scale of malnutrition and hunger is enormous. Illiteracy has not been abolished. The distribution of income, and more particularly of wealth and economic power, is highly unequal. The economic distance among the countries of the South has increased.

This is not the place, however, to explain or even to apologise for these and many other weaknesses. They remain to be overcome in the decades ahead. The overall record of the South during the past four decades nonetheless stands without parallel in history. The lessons of this rich experience remain to be distilled. They could help in forging future strategies for overcoming the South's patent weaknesses and building upon its strengths. Hence this tribute, lest we forget. The memory of the South's Golden Age could form the foundation of future hope and confidence.

I would like to conclude by citing from Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore's *Naibaidya*, published when the nineteenth century was yielding to the twentieth. He immortalised his dream of future India; and by extension all the poor and the oppressed of the world:

> Where the mind is without fear and the head is held
> high;
> Where knowledge is free;
> Where the world has not been broken up into
> fragments by narrow domestic walls;
> Where words come out from the depth of truth;
> Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards
> perfection;
> Where the clear stream of reason has lost its
> way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;
> Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-
> widening thought and action-
> Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my
> country awake.

■

I would like to acknowledge the support of the United Nations University, World Institute for Development Economics Research (Helsinki, Finland); the Sardar Patel Institute of Economic and Social Research (Ahmedabad, India); and Dalhousie University and Saint Mary's University (Halifax, Canada).

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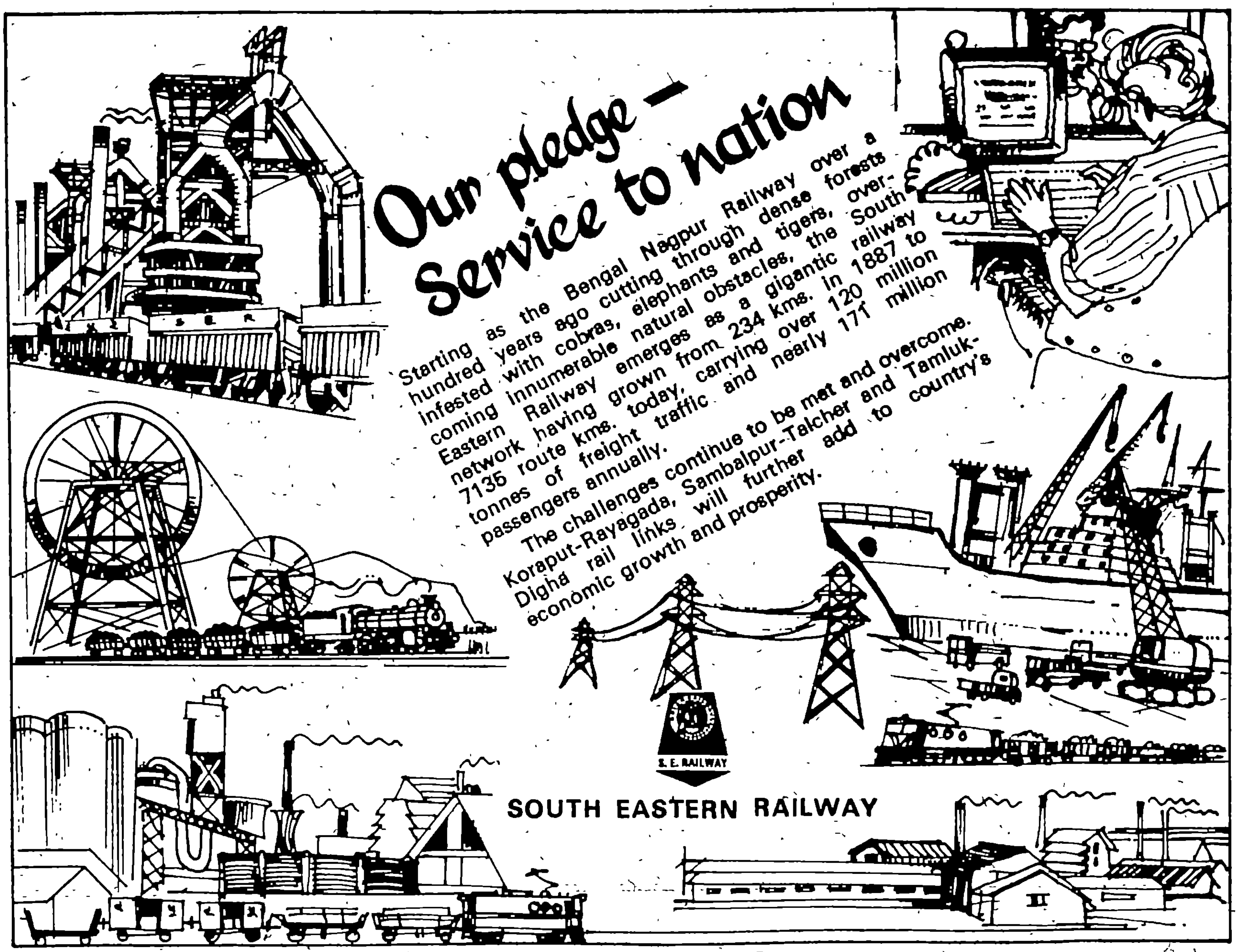
NOTES

1. The terms South, Third World, developing countries and less-developed countries (LDCs) have been used in this paper



Our pledge — Service to nation

Starting as the Bengal Nagpur Railway over a hundred years ago cutting through dense forests infested with cobras, elephants and tigers, overcoming innumerable natural obstacles, the South Eastern Railway emerges as a gigantic railway network having grown from 234 kms. in 1887 to 7135 route kms. today, carrying over 120 million tonnes of freight traffic and nearly 171 million passengers annually.

The challenges continue to be met and overcome. Koraput-Rayagada, Sambalpur-Talcher and Tamluk-Digha rail links will further add to country's economic growth and prosperity.

SOUTH EASTERN RAILWAY

interchangeably. The North denotes the developed countries, both in the West and the East.

2. Hobbes (1651), chapter 4.
3. Kuznets (1966), pp. 374-390; Patel, S. (1964).
4. Keynes (1931).
5. Kuznets (1966); also Landes (1969); Bronowski (1974).
6. Schumpeter (1939). This 1095-page work concentrates on cycles, but overlooks measurement of overall advance. In contrast, Kuznets (1966) measures advance, but ignores cycles. This peculiar division of labour in economics between analysis of cycles and growth has hampered an integrated view of development over time.
7. Hobsbawm (1973).
8. Marx and Engels (1964), p 10.
9. *Illustrated London News* (1851), Vol. XIX, No. 505.
10. *Japan Times* (August (18, 1915) cited by Bhagwati (1986), p. 25.
11. The Group was composed of five members—Alberto Baltra Cortez Professor of Economics, National University of Chile; D.R. Gadgil, Director, Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Poona, India; George Hakim, Counsellor, Legation of Lebanon, Washington, DC; W. Arthur Lewis, Professor of Political Economy, University of Manchester, England; and Theodore W. Schultz, Chairman, Department of Economics, University of Chicago, USA. At the request of the Group, George Hakim served as Chair. Though small in size, the Group assembled formidable talent Two of its members (Lewis and Schultz) were later to receive Nobel Prizes in Economics, and Gadgil was to become the Minister of Planning in India.
12. United Nations (1951), p. 78; also see Table 2, p. 76 and pp. 75-80 for more details.
13. United Nations (1951), p.79. The Group's optimism was unbounded. It stated: "These amounts are large, but they are not beyond the capacity of the developed countries to provide. The national incomes of the countries of Western Europe, Australasia, the United States, and Canada aggregate about $350 billion a year. If they were to transfer 2 per cent of this amount annually to under-developed countries, it would be equal to $7 billion a year. Neither would this be a very high target."
14. Lewis (1960), p.3.
15. Lewis (1980), pp.555-564.
16. Kuznets (1966), p.459.
17. Lewis (1980), September issue.
18. Kuznets (1975).
19. Streeten *et al.* (1981), Introduction.
20. World Bank (1988), pp.2,3, 187-189.
21. World Bank (1988), World development indicators, Table 2, pp. 224-225.
22. Tinbergen (1962). p.9; Reynolds (1986), and his more detailed work (1985).
23. Patel, S. (1958).
24. World Bank (1988), Appendix, Table 1, p. 222. For comparison, the figure for Bangladesh was $150 and for Sudan $320.
25. Maddison (1988). If Maddison's long period (1870-1986) is broken down into two subperiods (1870-1913 and 1913-86), we find that the growth rate for the earlier period was about 0.1% lower than that for the latter. This constancy syndrome in the long-term growth rate deserves a more systematic analysis than it has received so far.
26. Van Duijn (1983), Table 9.7, p.156.
27. Usui (1988).
28. For a detailed analysis of the experience, see the study by S. Patel and Associates (forthcoming). Some of the conclusions of this paper are based on my Overview, which is the fifth volume of this five-volume study, prepared under the UNU/WIDER project bearing the same title. The other four volumes analyse the experience of selected countries in Asia (I), Africa (II), Latin America (III), and the Developed Countries (IV).
29. Patel, M. (1989). The following paragraphs draw upon the data in chapter 2 of this study.
30. For details see Patel, S. (1985a) and (1985b).
31. Hobsbawm (1987), pp. 25, 29-30.
32. Patel, M. (1989), chapter 1.

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KRISHAN KANT: Consensual Nationalism

(Continued from page 35)

with emphasis on ethnicity. In Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union and Eriteria this has progressed to outright secession. In many other areas of the world there are prospects of more composite nations breaking up. Consequently, in India we have to build up forces of consensual nationalism and strengthen the structures of the consensual electoral process in place of the conflictual one we have at present. Our consensual process will have to accommodate the legitimate aspirations of autonomy at various levels and yet create an overarching consensual nationalism.

Thirdly, the world is moving towards marketisation and greater discipline of rational economic choices. This in turn calls for eschewing populist politics and economics and replacing them with a structure of decision-making which would enable the electorate to reject the politics of gimmickry.. That can be tried out in one election but cannot be repeated.

A new spirit of unifying nationalism is required. This can be brought about only through a change in the system of the process of power. All people want change and it is going to be a continuous one now. In the late twentieth century the future is pushing the past at a pace not known before. Just as there was a vested interest in freedom in spite of differences on various issues, people from the rich to the poor have a vested interest in the change of the national system. This is a long-term vested interest.

Concerned and sensitive political leaders, academicians, lawyers, journalists, students, activists—all should be invited to join this movement for a new nationalism in India. Just as the objective of freedom was liberation from the evil of foreign yoke, the unifying nationalism will be *'for social, moral and economic independence'* in the words of Gandhiji. This will be the *second battle for freedom* in which people as a whole will be joining and working together. ■

BAXI: State and Rights Movement

(Continued from page 43)

munities, beleaguered as most are by hostility of state and society. The enervation of dialogical spaces deprives the fledgling human rights communities of the resources of critique and coherence. But even a contingent coherence, despite a post-modernist world around us, is, I believe, a source of sustenance for human rights movements. And the dialogical space, within the matrix of human rights movement of the troubled Indian bourgeoisie, is most critical for its future (now marked by forces of a unipopular globalisation) theory as well as concrete engagement, especially when the state manages a representation of superior coherence.

Let me conclude by a gloss on Albert Einstein's dictum: "Politics is harder than physics." I add, by way of a footnote, that politics of human rights is even harder than politics of domination. And let me, also, compound the footnote by adding Emmanuel Levians' favourite phrase: "difficult freedom". Those who practice and proselytise human rights engage in the most difficult of all difficult freedoms since, above all, they owe an accountability to the victims of violation of rights, who should never experience the possibility that human rights advocacy or action may in turn revictimise them. The leitmotive of human rights movements in India, and elsewhere, is to resurrect the sovereignty of victims against that of the state. In that sense, human rights activism must subscribe to the radical wisdom of Albert Camus: "I rebel, therefore *we* are." ■

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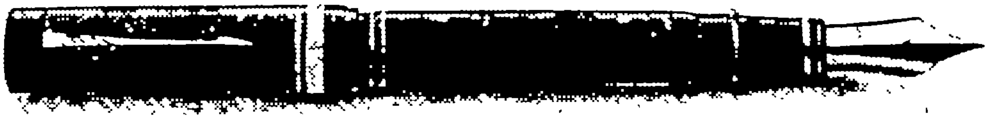

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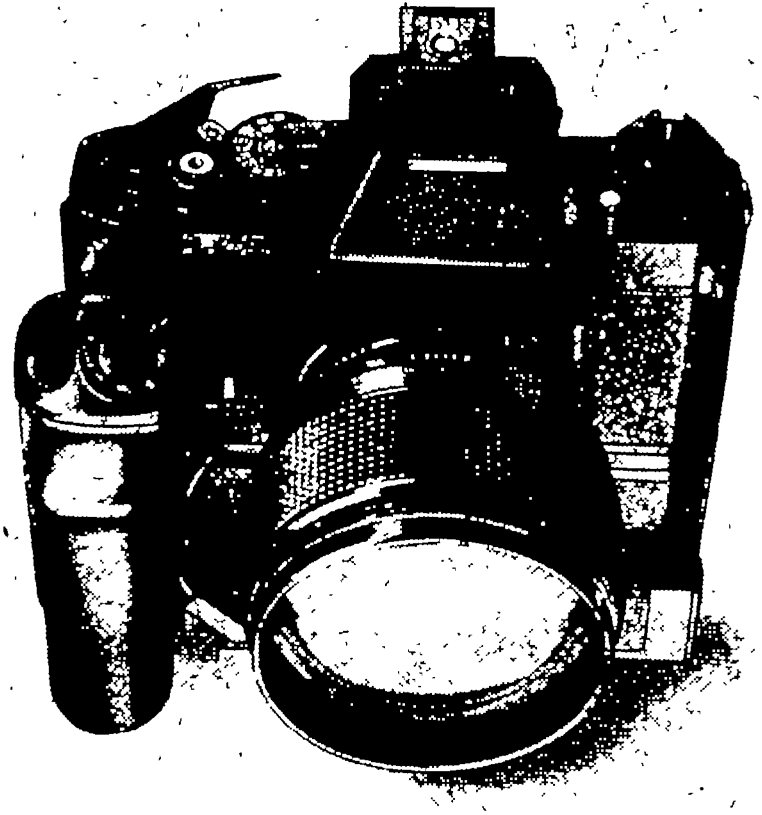

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Technology and Capital Import in Development Policy

ARUN GHOSH

It is a good principle in life that one should not have to rediscover or reinvent all that our predecessors have done. Human progress has depended in the past on every generation building on and improving upon the corpus of scientific knowledge and technological base left by previous generations. There should, therefore, be no difficulty in principle in a country seeking to import technology from abroad. That is how one could hope to take a leap-frogging stride in the quest for the material development of a nation.

But matters of principle do not always make good sense in real life. In principle, there are traffic rules which give the right of way in any intersection of vehicles coming from the right. Certainly, one has the right of way when the traffic lights are in one's favour. But supposing a ten-tonne truck is coming thundering along, breaking all traffic rules and simply ignoring the traffic lights, it would make good sense to forget the principle of the right of way, and to let the offending vehicle pass by first. You hang back if you value your life.

What is stated above is neither irrelevant nor inappropriate in the matter of technology import. Gone are the days when scientific inventions were regarded as intended for the benefit of all humankind. The concept of predatory "Intellectual Property Rights" (IPR) has not taken over. You may learn the properties of some herbal medicines from the aborigines, take away samples and take out a patent and behold, you can make millions from the discovery you have made, by making it legally impossible for anybody else to prepare the herbal concoction you have literally "stolen" from some people not quite as worldly-wise as you are.

The above is an extreme example. In general, today no company (or any other organisation except for some institutional bodies including some governments) is prepared to part with really good, efficient, or even the latest technology.

If you want to import technology, you have to pay through your nose; the IPR regime ensures that; and even so, by and large developing countries are sold third rate, outmoded technology, at a high price.

The author, a prominent economist, is a former Member of the Planning Commission.

In fact, there is a new buzzword now: developing countries need to be provided only with appropriate technology. It does not occur to any advocate of the principle of export of appropriate technology that most of the developing countries do indeed have their own appropriate technlogy; but that when you have to leapfrog in some selected direction, what you do not need is to be sold a lemon—at a high price—as the appropriate technology for you.

Take the development strategy adopted for India by P.C. Mahalanobis in the mid-fifties. Between Mahalanobis and Homi Bhabha, India has developed, in the teeth of world opposition, (a) nuclear and space capability, for which not only knowledge but also the import of all relevant components and materials had been scrupulously denied to India; (b) capability for the manufacture of equipment (for example, power generation, the setting up of complex process plants) which enabled us to make rapid strides in the build up of capacity which could be for further growth. In the late seventies, the Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) could win orders for setting up turnkey power projects abroad in the teeth of competition with the General Electric of the US, Siemens of Germany, English Electric of the UK and a number of other competitors from Japan. The BHEL did not merely get the order; after successful completion and commissioning of the project in Malaysia, it got a repeat order.

It is a different matter today that for more than a decade now, we have been sliding backwards. Our equipment manufacturing capability is getting rusted, partly for lack of orders and partly for the general demoralisation resulting from a combination of reasons. Our economy has stumbled from one crisis to another, with our balance of payments in such a dire striat that we have to surrender all our economic policy options to international lending agencies.

But that is not what we are discussing today. What we are discussing are the present policies on the import of foreign technology and of foreign

WEBEL

Role of Webel

- ☐ Nodal Agency for growth of electronics industry in the State
- ☐ Setting up of subsidiary and joint sector units, infrastructure development, Research and Development providing guidance and assistance to entrepreneurs
- ☐ Providing necessary infrastructure support to entrepreneurs—Salt Lake Electronics Complex
- ☐ Infrastructure development in districts, spread electronics industries in rural areas

Facilities Available within the Salt Lake Electronics Complex

- ☐ International Gateway Switch by Videsh Sanchar Nigam Ltd.
- ☐ Software Technology Park by DOE-WEBEL with dedicated high speed data transmission facility for software export
- ☐ Remote Job-Entry Terminal hooking up with Cyber 340 situated at Regional Computer Centre, Jadavpur
- ☐ ASIC Design Centre with ITI
- ☐ Three National quality and reliability centres are being established within the Complex
- ☐ DOE-WEBEL National R&D Centre—ER&DC, Calcutta has been established
- ☐ Vocational Training Centre under Indo-German collaboration being set up for training in test engineering in electronics

WEBEL Group of Companies

Communication Group

Webel Telecommunication Industries Ltd.
Webel Electronics Communication Systems
Webel Telematik Ltd.
Webel Communication Industries Ltd.

Components Group

Webel Crystals Ltd.
Webel Sen Capacitors Ltd.
Webel Carbon & Metal Film Resistors Ltd.
Webel Electro-Ceramics Ltd.
Webel Video Devices Ltd.

Others

Webel Business Machines Ltd.
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capital (by way of Direct Foreign Investment or DFI).

Historical Background

The first "official" statement on foreign capital was made by Jawaharlal Nehru in Parliament in November 1949. In that policy statement he clarified that: (a) existing foreign investments in India could remain, and would be free to repatriate profits and dividends (subject to payment of Indian taxes); (b) all future foreign investment proposal (and that covered proposals for foreign collaboration) would hereafter be screened so as to permit foreign investment only in desirable directions, in terms of the country's needs of growth, especially in areas where we need the infusion of foreign technology; and (c) by and large, we would prefer minority foreign investments so that new technology could be disseminated by Indians, with a view to promoting further growth of the economy on the basis of indigenous effort.

This policy informed the government's position on foreign collaboration and foreign investment upto 1974 when the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA) was enacted.

But prior to the FERA there was a landmark development which has remained generally unknown perhaps because it has remained wholly unimplemented to this day. In 1973, the Government of India came out with a Technology Policy Statement (approved by Parliament)—which, one then thought, was at par with the Industrial Policy Resolution of 1956.

There is not much merit today in going deeply into the Technology Policy Statement of 1973 because, as stated earlier, this policy has never been implemented; in fact, the bureaucracy managed to systematically sabotage all the essential ingredients of this Policy.

The main focus of the Technology Policy of 1973 was threefold: (a) the primary effort at technology development was to be through indigenous Research and Development effort, in which the various national laboratories were to play a crucial role, though similar effort by the private sector was also welcome, for which purpose, generous tax concessions were granted for Research and Development activity. (b) Import of technology was to be sought only in areas where we lacked such technology and which were necessary for national development. Thus, all proposals for technology import were to be screened by a high power official body called the Foreign Investment Board (which was to consider all applications for both foreign investment and foreign collaboration). (c) Finally, Indian industry was to first seek technology from one of the many R & D institutions before applying for the import of technology from foreign suppliers of technology. The Department of Science and Technology was to be one of the important agencies represented on the Foreign Investment Board, for this purpose.

The FERA (of 1974) changed the ground rules for foreign investment drastically. No unit with 100 per cent foreign equity was to be allowed to remain as such; they were required to compulsorily dilute foriegn equity, which was to be limited to 74 per cent, 51 per cent and 40 per cent of the total equity, according to the "prioriy" of the industry, its export capability/performance, and other considerations. A number of foreign firms decided to wind up their Indian operations as a result of this policy for which they were permitted full repatriation of their capital.

There were many objections to some of the implications of the policy package introduced in 1974. For instance, any firm diluting to 40 per cent foreign equity was to be treated as an Indian firm and, therefore, allowed the freedom to expand like any other firm. As is well known, *control* over a firm can be effectively exercised with much less than 40 per cent equity; and a large number of consumer industries took full advantage of this policy, driving out whatever little competition there was in respect of certain consumer goods. It would be invidious to take names, but some of the products are now household words in India.

Anyhow, at that time the Ministry of Finance which introduced the FERA—drew a distinction between direct foreign investment and the import of foreign technology, deeming the former as of relevance only from the balance of payments angle, though even from this angle the policy was clearly flawed and counterproductive.

Policy followed from the Eighties: "Supply Side Economics"

The eighties saw a remarkable turnaround in the strategy of industrial development in India, without any clear formulation of either the policy framework or its relation to overall development strategy. The broad philosophy behind the changed strategy needs a brief explanation. The seventies saw a steady growth in the domestic savings rate, reaching 23.2 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product in 1978-79. We had overcome the shock of the oil price hike (in November 1973), and managed to, by and large, balance the payments on external accounts and to stabilise prices. But the rate of economic growth remained sluggish. Instead of focussing attention on rural development—so as to stimulate mass demand—the economic policy-makers in India were attracted by the Reaganite theory of "supply side economics" (without pondering for a moment that the supply inelasticities in India were basic, and reflected the state of underdevelopment of the infrastructure, of human skills, of externalities as they are technically described by professional economists).

There was, in the eighties, a growing middle class in India, the size of which could be compared almost to the size of the population of Western Europe. This group of consumers now aspired for living standards of the Western countries. The free play of "supply side economics" involved: (a) the steady lowering of direct taxes (as well as of selected indirect taxes) to promote consumption; (b) the lowering of taxes on business also, to stimulate investments; and (c) greater reliance on market forces to lead to growth (which would in turn promote employment) through increased production and investment encourage through fiscal policy changes as per (a) and (b) above.

The results of the above set of policies are well known and need to be briefly enumerated as they are relevant for the present discussion. First, on the fiscal front, the deficit of the Central Government kept on increasing, leading to strong inflationary pressures. Secondly, there was a spate of applications for the approval of foreign collaboration arrangements for the manufacture (in India) of a whole set of elitist consumer goods. Significantly, the policy of liberalisation adopted by the government made for automatic approval of foreign collaboration arrangements so long as they did not envisage the payment of royalty higher than five per cent of sales (*minus* the import content). Thirdly, the manufacturing programmes initiated as a result were all import intensive; in some cases, we merely assembled diverse imported components, to be sold at a high price domestically. The increase in import demand—following the liberalisation of both industrial licensing and import policies—together with the imbalance between aggregate home demand and availabilities (arising from mounting budgetary deficits) led to an increasing deficit in the balance on external payments, which was met increasingly by short-term capital borrowed from abroad, at a high rate of interest.

To briefly illustrate these developments, the deficit of the Central Government on revenue account increased from an average of 1.1 per cent of the GDP in the Sixth Plan period (1980-81 to 1984-85) to 2.6 per cent in the Seventh Plan period (1985-86 to 1989-90), and further to 3.5 per cent in 1990-91. The deficit in the current account of the balance of payments likewise increased from 1.3 per cent of the GDP in the Sixth Plan period to 2.2 per cent of the GDP in the Seventh Plan period, and further, to 2.6 per cent in 1990-91. (All figures cited above are taken from the *Economic Survey 1991-92*, published by the Ministry of Finance; the 1990-91 figures are provisional.)

We have briefly looked at the consequences of a set of policies adopted during the eighties. We will later have occasion to examine the type of foreign collaboration/foreign investment cases approved in recent years, but the following figures of payment or royalty and technical knowhow fees—together with the number of proposals for foreign collaboration and foreign investment approved—over recent years would indicate the type of problem we have invited for ourselves.

Table 1

Number of Foreign Collaboration Cases Approved, and Actual Payments for Collaboration

	Number of Technical Collaboration Cases	Payment of Roylaty	Technical Approved Knowhow Fees
		(Rs Crore)	
1976/1975-76	277	10.49	25.66
1981/1980-81	389	8.88	104.93
1982/1981-82	588	15.99	270.70
1983/1982-83	673	39.72	258.58
1984/1983-84	740	27.60	314.89
1985/1984-85	1041	28.49	300.60
1986/1985-86	958	23.50	367.90
1987/1986-87	853	40.10	358.40

Source: Reserve Bank of India; as reported in *The Economic Times* (New Delhi), January 24, 1990.

It will be seen that the total payment on account of royalty and technical knowhow fees increased from Rs 36.15 crores in 1975-76 to Rs 398.50 croes in 1986-87, a more than ten times increase.

Some Examples of Foreign Collaboration

What is the type of product for the manufacture of which we have been paying close to Rs 400 crores (annually) as royalty and technical knowhow fees? Obviously, it is not possible to give a full list involving hundreds of collaboration arrangements, but a selection—with the names of the Indian parties and the country and year of collaboration—would be instructive.

The following list (Table 2) is long and tedious; it is also highly selective and partial and we refrain from citing the continuation of similar approvals in 1990 and 1991. It may be added that the above is merely a sample to the type of "freedom" enjoyed of late in regard to the type of collaboration arrangements agreed. Many prominent TV/VCR/VCP/Washing Machines and similar manufacturers have been omitted in the list proffered (obviously with limited data) by Chandra Shekhar. What is

Table 2

Illustrative list of Foreign Collaboration arrangements approved during the eighties

	Product	Name of Indian Party	Country of Collaborator	Year of Approval	Whether Financial Participation is involved
1.	Amusement devices Equipment	Saya Amusement Mfg. Ltd.	Italy	1987	-
2.	Electronic games	Zoom Electronics (I) Ltd.	Japan	1988	-
3.	Plastic and Mechanical Toys	Dinky Toys Ltd.	Japan	1986	(F)
4.	Plastic and Mechnical Toys	Kemp & Co. Ltd.	Hongkong	1986	(F)
5.	Stuffed Toys	G. Mythri	Korea	1986	(F)
6.	Toys	Chandamama Toytronix	Japan	1987	(F)
7.	Toys/Puzzles/Games	Kanianthra Sushil Joseph	USA	1986	(F)
8.	Children's knitwear	Hollandia Knitters (P) Ltd.	Netherlands	1980	(F)
9.	Cotton Headbands and bags	Malton Brown (I) Pvt. Ltd.	UK	1984	(F)
10.	Sports Caps	Elite Caps India Pvt. Ltd.	Canada	1986	(F)
11.	Banana Ketchup Beverages	Pallavi Food Products and.	Denmark	1987	-
12.	Beer	Skol Breweries Ltd.	UK	1983	-
13.	Chewing Gum & Bubble Gum	Orient Confectionaries Ltd.	S. Korea	1988	-
14.	Chocolates	Nvi Engg. Co. Pvt. Ltd.	UK	1984	(F)
15.	Margarine	Bhagwati Industries Ltd.	Netherlands	1986	(F)
16.	Processed Potato, Soft Drinks	Punjab Agro Industries Corpn.	USA	1988	(F)
17.	Ready to Use Convenience Food	Sonarome Chemicals Pvt. Ltd.	Netherlands	1987	-
18.	Tomato Paste	Bulgarian Foods Pvt. Ltd.	Bulgaria	1980	-
19.	Ceramic Crockery	Thayyil Ravindran	Japan	1987	(F)
20.	Ceramic Floor & Wall Tiles	Shakti Sugars Ltd.	Italy	1989	-
21.	Ceramic Glazed Tiles	Matsuzen Glazes Ltd.	Japan	1988	(F)
22.	Ceremic Sanitaryware	Aditya Sanitarywares Ltd.	Sweden	1986	(F)
23.	Cutlery	Monogram (I) Ltd.	Netherlands	1986	(F)
24.	Glassware	Borosil Glass Works Ltd.	USA	1980	(F)
25.	Melamine Tableware	Apiasar Brothers Ltd.	Switzerland	1985	-
26.	Sanitaryware & Kitchen Sinks	Scamb Poly Ltd.	Germany	1987	(F)
27.	White and Coloured Ceramic Wall Tiles	Indus Ceramics Ltd.	Italy	1988	-
28.	Airconditioning and Refrigeration	Voltas Ltd.	Japan	1989	-
29.	Artificial flowers	Namasivayan Sit	USA	1985	-
30.	Ballpoint pens	V.K. Shakdher	Switzerland	1982	(F)
31.	Car Seats	Bharat Seals Ltd.	Japan	1988	(F)
32.	Cosmetics	Daudamudi K.V.	USA	1984	-

Contd.

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	Product	Name of Indian Party	Country of Collaborator	Year of Approval	Whether Financial Participation is involved
33.	Cushioned Vinyl Floor Covering	Mahesh K. Shah	France	1985	-
34.	Domestic Knives	Finlandia Cutlery (P) Ltd.	Finland	1988	-
35.	Domestic Sewing Machines	Merritt India Ltd.	USA	1987	(F)
36.	Electric Washing Machine	Refrigeration & Appliance Co. Pvt. Ltd.	Italy	1984	-
37.	Fashion Imitation Jewellery	Normake Fashions Pvt. Ltd.	Canada	1988	(F)
38.	Female Hygienic Pads	Shalimar Synthetics (P) Ltd.	Sweden	1987	(F)
39.	Folding Umbrellas	Vijay Chawla	Japan	1982	(F)
40.	Gas Lighters	Bagri Ram Ratan	Spain	1980	-
41.	Handbags & Accessories	Zoya Mohan	USA	1988	(F)
42.	Knitting Needles	Premnath Agarwal	Switzerland	1984	(F)
43.	Lipsticks/Lipshines	Elcos India Pvt. Ltd.	USA	1988	-
44.	Microwave Ovens	Kelvinator of India Ltd.	USA	1988	(F)
45.	Paper Label Price marking system	Great Eastern Impex Pvt. Ltd.	UK	1988	-
46.	Pet Bottles	Pearl Polymers Pvt. Ltd.	UK	1986	-
47.	Plastic containers	Foundry & Engg. Services	UK	1982	(F)
48.	Plastic Moulded Goods	Aristo Plast Ltd.	USA	1983	(F)
49.	Plastic Shopping Bags	K.O. Mathewkutty	NRI	1987	(F)
50.	Scissors	Fiskars India Ltd	Finland	1985	(F)
51.	Shampoo/Aftershave Lotion	V.B. Deepak	France	1986	-
52.	Telescopic Antennae for TV	O.T. Inasu	Italy	1987	(F)
53.	Umbrella & Components	Nirmal H. Phophalia	Taiwan	1986	(F)
54.	Vacuum Flasks & Refills	Kunj Glass P. Ltd	France	1988	(F)
55.	Vinyl Floor Covering	Inarco Ltd.	UK	1985	-
56.	Washing Machines	Niky Tasha India P. Ltd.	UK	1987	-
57.	Washing of Carpets	Radhika Woollen & Silk Mills (P) Ltd.	USA	1980	-

Note: Those indicated as (F) involve financial collaboration, that is, foreign capital participation in the equity also.

Source: Chandra Shekhar: *Political Economy of India*, Vikas Publishing House, published for Studies in Industrial Development, New Delhi, 1992.

important to note are: (a) that as many as 34 out of the 57 cases cited above involve foreign financial participation in equity in addition to collaboration; and (b) mere participation of foreign capital does *not* imply that royalty on sales of knowhow fees would not be charged by the foreign party. In fact, the common practice is for such payment, *plus* the import of components from the foreign partner at whatever price he wants. There is no "competition" because the import of the finished products is not allowed.

One should not be churlish. One should not envy some people having access to the "goodies" which make life pleasant for the elite in India, in the style of the affluent in the developed countries of the West. But two basic questions arise: first, was the new technology policy which was initiated in the eighties put up to and approved by Parliament, because all the cases cited above fly in the face of the 1973 technology import policy of the eighties, added by the liberalised facility for import of components, has succeeded in doing is to significantly increase the import bill for the country, together with a significant increase in the repatriation of profits, royalty and technical knowhow fees, without any benefit either to the basic industrial strength of the country or to exports. The impact of "supply side economics" as practised in India during the eighties has merely resulted in inflation at home and balance of payments difficulties abroad.

We do not believe in a rigid autarchy, but we do want to make India self-sufficient in regard to her needs as far as this is possible. We want to develop international trade, importing articles which we cannot easily produce and exporting such articles as the rest of the world wants from us. We do not propose to submit to the economic imperialism of any other country or to impose our own on others. We believe that the nations of the world can co-operate together in building a world economy which is advantageous for all and in this work we shall gladly co-operate. But this economy cannot be based on the individual profit motive, nor can it subsist within the framework of imperialist system. It means a new world order, both politically and economically, and free nations co-operating together for their own as well as the larger good.

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The other major point to remember is that this pattern of development has been totally different from the pattern of development envisaged in successive Five Year Plans. The technology policy followed over the past decade has ignored the basic needs of the bulk of the population; of the need for increased employment (which would make for more widespread income generation); of the need for making a positive thrust for exports.

Example of the Asian Giants

At this juncture it would be useful to bring in the example of the "Newly Industrialising Countries" (NICs) of East Asia, or the new Asian Giants in the field of industry and export as they are sometimes called. Reference is, in particular, to Japan and South Korea, and of late, Taiwan, mainland China, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia.

The Japanese and the South Korean models are particularly instructive. Both countries exercised a rigid control over the import of technology. The government and the industry together formulated a set of target products—for large scale manufacture and export—and set about the business with single-minded effort. Technology—the best of technology—was to be imported, with a significant domestic Research and Development (R&D) effort to absorb, adopt, adapt and further develop the technology. In area after area, this procedure was followed with singular success. Japan and South Korea, and of late Taiwan as also mainland China today dominate the US market for manufactured goods, starting with automotive vehicles, to consumer electronics, and on to garments, toys, diverse items of home appliances and, almost all consumer goods except alcohol and perfumery, which are European specialities.

But even to this day, the Japanese and South Koreans do not allow free import of technology—except with a purpose and a long term plan.

Indian Scenario

Why has Indian technological growth lagged behind? Has it lagged behind or has it been forced to take a backseat? Take the achievements of Indian scientists and technologists in the fields of nuclear and space technology. With the whole Western world denying *any* help (either by way of technology or even of highly specialised materials), our experts have made significant headway in both areas. As stated earlier, during the seventies the Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) was able to secure turnkey contracts abroad, for setting up power generating plants. The Bureau of Industrial Costs and Prices (under the Ministry of Industry) has found that our "conversion costs for most types of heavy equipment (including not only power equipment but also equipment for the manufacture of like pressure vessels) are lower than abroad, our sale prices being higher only because of higher prices of raw materials like stainless and special steel.

What is the status of the BHEL and other giants of yesteryear? Today, the BHEl is starved of orders and is languishing. The Government is short of funds, and new power projects are approved only against foreign aid. The aid donors naturally insist on purchase of equipment from their countries. Two simple examples should suffice. The Anpara Power Station in UP is being set up with foreign aid, at a cost nearly 80 per cent higher than the cost of an equivalent BHEL plant. The Bakreswar Power Plant in West Bengal is today in doldrums because we depended on assistance from the USSR for the project. India can produce the required equipment, but India has reached a stage when India's development cannot be financed from India's internal savings. India must depend on external aid to finance its development.

A direct consequence of this policy is under-employment of the capacities for equipment manufacture already created in the country, under-employment of the labour engaged in these businesses, absence of profitability—and sometimes—losses of the public sector enterprises involved and, worst of all, demoralisation of the entire workforce in the PSEs.

Latest Policies

To remedy the problem of lack of resources, the Government of India has embarked on a set of policies which are incomprehensible. All direct tax rates (including the Capital Gains Tax) have been lowered, and the wealth tax on financial assets totally abolished. At the same time, the rate of interest on government securities has been increased and the Satutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR) of banks lowered. We need not go into the stock market scam and fraud which these policies induced; but clearly, the above policies can only increase the budgetary deficit of the Central Government. And the response of the government is to give an open invitation to foreign capital to set up power plants (with even 100 per cent foreign equity) with a *guaranteed return* of 16 per cent on the investment, when the power rates charged by the State

Electricity Boards (SEBs) involve a subsidy even at the present lower costs of power generation and transmission.

The above is but one example. The other is the open invitation to foreign capital to invest (up to 51 per cent equity in joint ventures) for exploitation of proven oil reserves at Mukta, Panna, and a few other fields. The two specifically mentioned are calculated to yield a total of more than 26 million tonnes of crude oil per year, together with the associated natural gas recoverabe with the crude oil. At current import price of crude oil at some Rs 4500 per tonne ($ 20 per barrel of oil), the value of the crude oil alone would be some Rs 11700 crores per annum; the value of natural gas would be additional. Profits in the oil extraction business range from 30 to 40 per cent, after taking *all* costs, including capital servicing charges. The foreign investors would be able to repatriate their investment in a year or two.

The third approach of the government is to gradually sell off the equity of the public sector enterprises (PSEs). A first lot of such sales (averaging eight per cent of the equity of 38 PSEs) has already been made at par. Take the BHEL. Its equity is Rs 240 crores. The value of its assets today is of the order of Rs 25000 crores. On market valuation, the BHEL share should have a premium ranging from 50 to 100 times. And yet, 20 per cent of BHEL shares have been sold "at par". And as per the report of the Janakiraman Committee, they have ended up with a foreign bank.

Since the government is unwilling to tax the rich, it wants to sell off all the assets the nation has built up, over the past 40 years, to both nationals and foreigners, including foreign banks.

In the process, we are not only damaging the productive capacity in the economy built up over the years, we are giving a permanent setback to the growth of indigenous technology.

Concluding Remarks

Development of an economy implies, in essence, the development of the capabilites of the people of the concerned country. The effort has to be a multifaceted one; it has to do with improving the level of education, of health, of skills, of general living conditions—and most of all, employment opportunities with an adequate income so that children are not forced out of schools to work— together with encouragement of indigenous scientific and technological capability. This last requirement calls for state support of Research and Development activity and proper follow-up through wide dissemination of information, knowledge, technical education and technological capability. If "innovation" is to be promoted—and innovation has been and continus to be the mainspring of productivity growth—we need to have an economic regime which promotes indigenous capability. This does not imply "insulation" from the rest of the world; in fact, there is need for continuing interaction with developments in other parts of the world. But such interaction is successful by and large among equals or near equals.

India is endowed with a manpower which has shown the ability to rival any other country in terms of knowledge, of skills, of technological capability. It is these talents and forces that need to be nurtured and promoted. The type of regime now being introduced since July 1991, with the Dunkel Draft on GATT reform looming large on the horizon, is not conducive to the growth of technological capability of Indians. Little islands of excellence—by way of "enclaves" of foreign capital generated production ventures, where indigenous skills and capabilities are deliberately prevented from flowering—leads to what is known as banana republic -like development.

This is what our economic policy-makers need to relearn from the fact that over the past fourteen months we have had neither internal stabilisation nor a balance in external payments, but merely an accentuation of unemployment and internal dissent throughout the country, and a steadily deepening external debt. As per the World Debt Tables published by the World Bank, India's total external debt as of December 1990 was $70.1 billion. This figure somehow misses out the "foreign currency" and non-resident (external) rupee deposit of the NRIs, which were, as of December 1990, $5.5 billion and $ 3 billion respectively. Since 1990 end, we have borrowed significant sums from the IMF the World Bank and the ADB. The total external debt of India, as of June 1992, may be estimated at between $82 to 84 billion. As per official statements, we need "extraordinary external financing" to the tune of some $ 3 to 4 billion annually over the next few years. We desperately need to halt this mounting external debt, to rely on internal savings, to rely on our own capability to promote the future growth of the country. The pursuit of the present technology and capital import policy can result only in getting the country mired in debt from which it would be difficult to extricate ourselves. ■

South African Indians

Facing the Future in a Period of Transition

NINAN KOSHY

As the pillars of apartheid begin to crumble and South Africa moves agonisingly towards the goal of a non-racial democratic society, a good section of the Indian community there appears to be uncertain and even anxious about their future. A number of factors contribute towards this uncertainty in a situation which is highly complex.

There is an impression in many quarters that South African Indians are generally prosperous. This is partly correct but subject to several qualifications. If one visits Indian areas in and around Durban one can see palatial bungalows, middle class dwelling places and sub-standard houses, often in separate sections. While there are some very rich Indians, a visible middle class and a large number of professionals, the majority of the Indians belong to the working class. Within the confines of the apartheid system it is true that the Indians have been less disprivileged than the Africans. But it should not be forgotten that the Indians also have been oppressed in various ways under apartheid and have been victims of many laws of discrimination including that of the Group Areas Act. In the suburbs of Durban one can notice old temples in prime land, set apart for the Whites (under the Group Areas Act). This is the land from which Indians who had lived there for long were evicted. It is true that Indians have been upwardly mobile because of ambition, hard work, family ties and the full utilisation of the opportunities especially in education. As the moment of truth approaches with the ending of apartheid and the possible emergence of a non-racial democratic South Africa (which in practice will be dominated by Africans), the situation is in some ways reminiscent of Indian attitudes in the last stages of decolonisation in countries like Kenya and Uganda.

As a minority of one million, Indians constitute less than three per cent of the total population of South Africa. But if one looks at the delegates at the CODESA (Convention for a Democratic South Africa), this smallest population group in the country is highly visible. There are two from the Tri-Cameral Parliament and two from the Indian Congresses (Natal and Transvaal); then there are Indians wearing the hats of the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party and an Indian judge as co-chairman of the meeting. This apparent prominence of Indians in the negotiating forum is misleading as in the new South Africa which emerges from the negotiations the Indian community as a minority may not be politically prominent or influential.

The minority issue in South Africa has special characteristics which make it even more complex than it is in most other countries. It is a minority (the White) that oppressed the vast majority with a vicious and inhuman system the effects of which will continue for a long time. That minority still rules the country, controlling all the levers of power. It owns the vast majority of wealth and resources including the land. That same minority is now using the issue of minority rights to block progress in negotiations for a non-racial and democratic South Africa, and it wants to impose a permanent minority veto in the future administration. This makes it extremely difficult for the ANC to address genuine minority issues which may be there for the Indians, the Coloureds and also for the Whiltes in a fututre South Africa. The official position of the ANC is that the rights of minorities will be protected by a justiceable Bill of Rights which will be part of the new Constitution. The ANC has published a Bill of Rights which will easily stand the scrutiny of constitutional lawyers and human rights advocates. But it assumes, as many constitutions do, that by protecting individual human rights the rights of minorties also will be protected. This has not proved to be the case in most countries and hence the discussion internationally on what is called group rights. But because of the history of the rights of groups under apartheid, the ANC does not want to touch group rights. That term has an

The author, a former Secretary of the World Council of Churches, was a Visiting Fellow of the Harvard Law School (1991-92). A prominent educationist, he spent a fortnight in South Africa last July and studied the situation with regard to the Indian community there.

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ominous meaning in South Africa. This in addition to its own understanding of the national question makes the ANC unable to deal, at least for the present, with minority issues. The result is that many Indians feel that the ANC has either neglected them or taken them for granted. This perception has to be dealt with though several of the concerns of the Indians may not be well-founded.

This is in spite of the fact that for several decades large sections of the Indian community have identified themselves as Blacks and have seen themselves primarily as Africans and then only as Indians. It is true that till the late thirties the Indian political movements in South Africa were dominated by the richer and bigger merchants who pursued a policy of accommodation with the Whites and the socio-economic order they imposed. But this changed as consciousness developed not only about unity among Indians but also unity between Indians and Africans. It is in this context that Yusuf Dadoo and M.G. Naicher emerged as leaders whose personal histories coincided with major developments in the history of the liberation movement in the country. They gave leadership to the Indian Congresses of Natal and Transvaal. During the 1950s the South African Indians took active part in campaigns such as the Defiance Campaign, the Congress of the People which drew up the Freedom Charter and in the trade union movement. When the strategy of the revolutionary movement shifted to armed struggle, young militants from the Indian community joined 'Umkhonto we Sizwe' (the armd wing of the ANC-Communist Party alliance). In fact Ahmed Kathrada, an Indian, was one of the founders of Umkhonto.

This has been part of the record of the Natal Indian Congress which was never banned as an organisation though a number of its activists were banned or imprisoned. The NIC of course faced a dilemma at the time of the unbanning of the ANC in 1990. There were differences of opinion within the NIC about its future role. In spite of its separate identity in the CODESA, the NIC does not any longer function as a separate organisation. It has no branches and all its activists have been absorbed by the ANC. Indians played a major role in the early eighties in the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) and the United Democratic Front (UDF) because the style of these organisations suited the Indian tradition of passive resistance and mass demonstrations. Even earlier in the ANC and the SACP several Indians held important positions and through the MDM and UDF also many joined the ranks of the ANC. Some Indians now hold leading positions—including that of the General Secretary (Jay Naidoo)—in the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU).

◆

A very large number of young people of Indian origin are active in the ANC. While it is true that there are not many Indians holding positions at the highest level in the leadership of the ANC, there are a number of Indians in the National Executive and it does not go unnoticed that several of the intellectuals who do the research and produce the documents of the ANC are Indians. The leadership relies on them and they are highly respected and quite influential. In south Natal alone there are seven thousand Indians in active membership of the ANC in addition to thousands of supporters.

However, it would be far from the truth to suggest that the majority of Indians support the ANC. In fact surveys as well as general impressions show the opposite. The most extensive survey on political attitudes of South Africans conducted by the Institute for Black Research found in 1990, at the height of the popularity of the ANC, that the majority of Indians would vote for the National Party, the ruling party in the White minority government. Since then the National Party has staked its claims as a non-racial party and a party that can forge and lead an alliance of the minorities. These claims are now assiduously canvassed among the Indians (and Coloureds) by a large number of full-time workers of the National Party which has made inroads into the community. This process has been to some extent helped by the Indian representatives in the Tri-Cameral Parliament. Though these MPs were elected in an election which was boycotted by more than ninety per cent of Indians they are now quite visible on the national scene and obviously enjoy their role during the transition.

This brings up another interesting point. Progressive Indians and their political movements have successfully persuaded the majority of Indians over the last three decades to boycott apartheid's political institutions for Indians, like the South African Indian Council (SAIC), Local Committees and then the House of Delegates of the Tri-Cameral Parliament. It may be recalled that it was at an anti-SAIC meeting in 1981 that Reverend Allan Boesak first made the proposal to form the United Democratic Front. Thus the experience of the Indians has been in boycotting elections and not in participating in them. Now Indians have to be persuaded to vote in the non-racial elections which may take place in the near future. This may not be easy at a time when a sizeable section of the Indians seems to be indifferent to political activity. This indifference goes hand in hand with the fear of changes.

Partly the fear is about Africans and the African ascendancy. Indians—may be with a transplantation of the caste system—are apparently not averse to someone being above them as long as there is someone below them. But they find it extremely uncomfortable when those below them suddenly rise to the top. This happened in a number of East African countries and it is now happening in South Africa. But it has to be admitted that it is not just 'caste psychology' that affects the Indians in South Africa. While some of the fears may not be well-founded there are grounds for genuine concern.

The violence in the Black townships affects Indians in various ways though they are not directly touched. The escalation of violence from the mid-1980s partly accounts for the decline of their interest in mass action. Violence has made them an inward-looking community. While violence erupts between the supporters of the ANC and those of Inkatha in the Black townships, it makes many Indians nervous about membership in the ANC. Meanwhile the Inkatha leader, Buthelezi, periodically reminds them of the 1949 riots in which Indians were attacked by the Africans. Indians of the older generation have still haunting memories of the attacks by African rioters. The reminder by Buthelezi is taken not as an empty threat but a reason for real fear not only from the Inkatha supporters but possibly even from other Africans during the transition or after a change of government. In 1990 there was an orchestrated campaign of violence against Indians in central Durban when Africans attacked Indians. Many traders closed down their business. It is said that central Durban has not yet recaptured its former vibrancy.

Indians fear that the upward mobility which has been characteristic of the community may be halted or even reversed when the African majority make their legitimate claim on the resources and services in the country. To the Africans the positions of the Indians may appear to be what they can immediately aspire for and some of them may see the Indian community as a stumbling block in attaining such aspirations. The villain of the piece, the White, may often be invisible, and the 'boss' in a firm will be the Indian who is a middle manager. While the real exploiter will be sitting at a distance or in the top floor of the multi-storyed building, the Indian will be seen as the exploiter.

Already some problems can be noticed. With the abolition of influx control and the Group Areas Act a large number of Blacks has moved to squatter camps known as informal settlements. In the Durban area many such informal settlements are close to Indian areas and some in Indian-owned farms and other properties. The more wealthy Indians take legal action for eviction of the squatters or demolition of such settlements while the working class Indians appear to be tolerant of these settlements in their proximity. African children now want to join Indian schools and because of the differences in the educational systems for the different communities under apartheid, including the medium of instruction, this has begun to create problems of adjustment. Many Indians feel that this will result in a decline of the standards of their schools.

On the broader political issues also Indians have concerns. Some of them have raised questions about the influence of the South African Communist Party in the ANC. They are worried about the eventual policies of the Communist Party on religion, economy, etc. It is true that these concerns are not confined to the Indians. About the ANC itself many Indians have questions about some of its policies, especially economic policies and even about styles of leadership and negotiating positions.

Other political movements have only negligible influence among the Indians. The Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) does not appear to be very active in most parts of the country though many feel that it enjoys substantial support from sections of Blacks. From the beginning there have been Indians in leadership positions of the PAC. There will be few supporters of the Inkatha in the Indian community though there are some who believe that some federal or regional arrangment which Inkatha advocates might bring some advantages for the Indians.

Vast sections of Indians seem to be uncertain of the future and their own political options, an uncertainty that is likely to be of benefit to the National Party. Meanwhile, one is impressed by the large number of young Indian activists in the ranks of the ANC especially in Natal who not only are effective political organisers but committed to social action and community service in the sprawling Indian townships like Chatsworth, a suburb of Durban. They are convinced that the democratic rights and the welfare of the Indian people can best be defended in a country free from the scourge of racism, national oppression and class exploitation. They believe that the future of the Indian community lies in its identification with the Africans as they struggle together for justice and human dignity and build together the new South Africa. ■

Communalism in Contemporary India

Some Theoretical Considerations

RANDHIR SINGH

Communalism was a major social and political problem in our country during the colonial period, it gained yet another basis and lease of life with the partitioned independence of 1947, and has acquired a truly explosive dimension in recent years. It is significant that while there is a general abhorrence of communalism and literally none in this country would like to be described or known as a communalist, communalism persists, an ugly presence in our everyday life and a potent threat to the life and property of our people in large parts of the country and to their struggle for a better life everywhere. The need to understand communalism, and to struggle against it, was never more imperative than it is today. What follows is a modest effort in this regard, based on what I have already written on the subject elsewhere.*

One aspect of the matter needs to be immediately taken note of. We must recognise that, once arisen, like any other socially significant phenomenon, communalism has come to acquire an autonomous reality and logic of its own. As such, subject of course to the ebb and flow of the country's social and political life, especially the shifts within bourgeois politics, communalism today has an extraordinary diversity of forms or aspects, community, region or economy-wise peculiarities and variations, complex and changing historical contexts or conjunctures, and a certain specificity of expression each time, including its use by the different political formations of the ruling classes at different times, occasionally even in their factional infighting, and so on. These are indeed among considerations of great tactical importance in the struggle against communalism, for there is no escaping *the absolute necessity* of fighting communalism in each and every one of its expressions on its own specific terrain. This is an essential part of any effective struggle against communalism. And it is in this area that competent scholarly work on communalism has made its most valuable contribution.

My concern in this note, however, is not with these specificities of communalism but with a few issues of general nature, clarity regarding which, I believe, may help towards a better, more true, and therefore politically more effective understanding of communalism in contemporary India (including its reality and logic as an autonomous phenomenon).

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THE first issue concerns the *decisive* importance of *how* you understand or explain contemporary communalism, for this determines how you will proceed to struggle against it, what will be the focus or main thrust of this struggle. In social scientific thinking much has been made in recent years of the *logical* disjunction between facts and values, between explanation and prescription, and there has been an ignorant, philosophically illiterate insistence upon 'value freedom' or 'ethical neutrality' in social science scholarship. This is not the place or occasion to discuss this problem. Nor is it necessary. For my *purpose* it is enough to recognise and counter-insist that in all human activity, whose characteristic is purpose, knowing and doing are so related that explanation is invariably suggestive of prescription, just as a diagnosis always points to the treatment. In other words, an explanation or understanding, of any social phenomenon, always has a 'value slope'. And this, I suggest, is true of every understanding or explanation of communalism in contemporary India.

Thus, if 'religion' is central to your understanding of communalism, the remedy will necessarily lie in exhortations on behalf of either 'true religion' or,

The author, one of the most successful teachers in Delhi University as a Professor of Political Theory, has now retired from the University. The argument of this article was put together sometime back as a keynote address for a seminar at the Aligarh Muslim University but eventually that did not take place.

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*See *Of Marxism and Indian Politics*, especially the essay "Theorising Communalism in India", Ajanta Publications (India)", New Delhi, 1990; also "Communalism and the Struggle against Communalism: A Marxist View" in *Social Scientist*, Vol. 18, Nos. 8-9, August-September 1990.

I believe that we have cause to be proud of the fact that for a long series of centuries beset with vicissitudes of stupendous proportions, crowded with things that are incongruous and facts that are irrelevent, India still keeps alive the inner principle of her own civilisation against the cyclonic fury of contradictions and the gravitational pull of the dust . . . Our great hope lies there, where we realise that something positively precious in our achievements still persists in spite of circumstances that are inclement.

Rabindranath Tagore

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from the other end, cultivation and spread of 'scientific temper'. An explicitly formulated variant of this kind of understanding, which in fact has emerged as the most widely accepted theory today, is the view that 'communalism is above all a communal ideology', a dangerously 'false' ideology. That being the case, it only follows that 'it is at the level of struggle against that ideology that the way out has to be found. Any other way out will prove to be no way out at all.' The 'value slope' indicated is a struggle at the level alone—any other 'level of struggle' is simply explained out. (Incidentally, those who understand and argue in this manner generally hold that salvation lies in the ideology of nationalism: 'nationalist ideology must confront and overpower communal ideology'). Again, if the evil of communalism is primarily located in politics as such, the solution almost inevitably turns out to be an appeal to all and sundry, including political parties, to eschew such 'pseudo-politics' or 'anti-politics' as scholars have called it, and practice non-communal or secular, some kind of 'true' or 'genuine' politics. Or, if you go by an 'economic interpretation' of communalism, the prescription will be a demand for 'rapid economic development', 'more job opportunities', etc. And so on.

Such explantations, each in its own partial manner, certainly partake of the 'truth' about communalism in contemporary India and the forms of active intervention suggested by these explanations are indeed important in any struggle against communalism today. But 'the truth is the whole', as Hegel put it. And if therefore we have an understanding of communalism which, including all this and more, is a totalising, all-sided understanding, which even as it grasps communalism's specific aspects or autonomous reality and its certain irreducible basis in religion or religious identity, seeks to explore the entire ensemble of its social interconnections, above all with economy but also with history and politics, ideology and culture, etc., especially those which have made it the explosive issue it is in Indian society today, the prescription will be: a really effective struggle against communalism has to be a *revolutionary* struggle, which even as it values and includes within itself every form of particular intervention or struggle against communalism, is a part of the Indian people's larger struggle for a better life, for a sane and just, a genuinely secular and democratic society that guarantees a life of dignity and honour to all its citizens.

The second issue concerns what is possibly the most common ideological error characterising scholarly as well as 'common sense' understanding of communalism in India, which invariably regards communalism as the opposite of nationalism. Nationalism is, by definition as it were, assumed to be secular, a view typically expressed in the daily invocatory reference by anyone or everyone these days to 'national and secular forces' in India. This error is born of a certain facile understanding of the pre-1947 history of Indian nationalism and is reinforced by an equally facile understanding of what happened in India when it gained its independence in 1947.

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INDIAN nationalism has to confront and oppose communalism as a divisive and anti-democratic force, sought to be used by imperialism to divide the Indian people and undermine their fight for freedom. Thus, it is often taken for granted that nationalism and communalism are by their very nature antithetical or mutually exclusive, that to speak up for nationalism is, *ipso facto*, to be secular, and even democratic. However, this is simply not the case. A certain historic justification for this view notwithstanding, even for the pre-1947 period it is today well to recognise that Gandhi and bourgeois-led Indian nationalism, along with its other limitations, carried a great deal of Hindu and other communal baggage with it, and that its 'final triumph' in 1947 was at the same time a compromise and settlement with imperialism which partitioned the country along communal lines, with disastrous long-term consequences for the common people on both sides of the borders.

As regards what happened in 1947, its essential character, we need to recognise that a powerful social, political and ideological force in modern India, nationalism (including nationalist movement or politics) is yet a historical phenomenon with class and society-specific character, potentialities and limitations. As such, nationalism is not something progressive, or for that matter reactionary, in itself. On the contrary, whether nationalism (or nationalist politics) is one or the other, or anything better or worse, this is determined by its specific character, its programme and leadership, and above all by the concrete historical conjuncture.

Thus nationalism in India before 1947 was indeed progressive; under a different, more advanced class leadership and programme, it could have been radical, even revolutionary. It was progressive because it aimed at resolving the basic structural contradiction of Indian society, congealed in imperialism, whose resolution, *against* imperialism, alone could clear the path for the Indian people's continuing struggle for a better future. But nationalism need not be necessarily or entirely so in the post-1947 period. For the settlement of 1947 had its own harsh logic.

It is customary in conventional scholarship or historiography to take a liberal, linear view of the historical process in India around 1947. In this view the Indian nation, or 'nation-in-the-making' if you prefer, is seen as winning *political* freedom for India in 1947 and then expectedly and almost unproblematically moving on to win *economic* freedom for the country—a movement which fortyfive years hence is still on. The real historical process, however, has been quite different, essentially dialectical. The very manner in which the contradiction with imperialism was resolved, its 'transfer of power' involving no basic economic or social structural change, but putting new, now *Indian* ruling classes in control of the state power this made the Indian people's struggle for economic freedom not only that much more complex and difficult but also primarily a matter of struggle against these classes for the same reason, even the Indian people's continuing fight against imperialism, or neo-colonialism of the transnationals, is no longer simply a continuation of the old anti-imperialist fight; henceforth it too can be effectively waged only as a part of this more base struggle. For the imperialist intervention in our country, the neo-colonialist 'integration' into the global capitalist economy, now takes place primarily by the grace of end through the opportunities provided by precisely new rulers of India.

For my present argument the point to be noticed is that the Indian ruling classes have, over the years, used their state power to facilitate a kind of socio-economic development in India which has led to the emergence in this country of the now universally admitted 'two nations'—the Indian 'twin-nation' (K.N.Raj), "socio-economic *dualism*' which is so very 'corrosive' (Sukhamoy Chakravarty), 'this dualism in Indian society' that is threatening to become 'explosive' (V.K.R.V.Rao), the 'two Indias' of Rajni Kothari, V.P. Singh, R.K. Hegde *et al*, etc. etc. In this situation nationalism or nationalist perspective only obscures the essential character of Indian social reality today, its underlying exploitative and oppressive socio-economic structures, and thus serves to cover up or provide alibis for the historic default of the post-colonial ruling classes in India, and increasingly turns into a legitimising ideology for the new social order and the powers that be.

Nationalism as an ideology in the service of the established social order is nothing new or surprising. In modern times, the ruling classes of the countries of imperialism have traditionally used nationalism to consolidate their rule at home and to defend and justify aggression and domination abroad. More recently we have witnessed several cases of similar political-ideological use of nationalism by ruling class politicians—among these by Margaret Thatcher in England with the Falklands War, or by Ronald Reagan in the US in his twice successful bid for the American Presidency. Nearer home we saw Rajiv Gandhi romp home in the unprecedented electoral triumph of 1984 on a platform of nationalism, with strong Hindu chauvinist, even anti-Sikh, overtones the emerging platform of Hinduised Indian nationalism, which has now been well and properly appropriated by another political formation of the Indian ruling classes, the Bharatiya Janata Party.

Besides, we must not forget that we have known nationalism of German, Japanese and Italian varieties. With the ruling classes in the normal pursuit of their interests or when faced with situations of crisis in the polity, nationlism has often taken all sorts of statist or racist or fascist or imperialist forms, providing ideological support or cover to the emergence of reactionary authoritarian regimes. And far too often in our times people have been sacrificed to 'the nation', as has already begun to happen, in its own way, in this country too. One has only to listen to our rulers' rhetoric about 'unity and integrity of the nation' and look at their practice on the ground!

Thus in the Indian context today, a struggle against commuhalism from the standpoint of nationalism is, if not entirely misleading, highly inadequate and problematic. It is certainly not going to be effective unless it is at the same time a part of the struggle to rescue the 'nation' from its ruling classes, if I may put it that way.

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THE third issue concerns religion and religious identity which do provide a certain irreducible basis for communalism in India, and in understanding and taking care of communalism, we need to understand and take care of religion and the problems of religious identity also. Religion as such is not my concern at the moment. Here it is only necessary to reiterate the need for a critical but sophisticated treatment of the question of religion insofar as it feeds or is manipulated to feed communalism. To this I shall add a specific argument on the question of religious identity.

Discussion or treatment of religion in our country is generally much too simplistic and cliché-ridden, even in its more sublime metaphysical or philosophically esoteric passages; typically there is its idealisation and defence as simply a spiritual phenomenon that caters to high human values and aspirations, or, far less often, its criticism and rejection as simply an erroneous view of things that is waiting to yield to a rational or scientific understanding—and almost always a shared ahistorical approach, a substantive denial of any *genuine* basis for religion in social reality. What is needed is a radically different, deeper understanding which, aware of the social basis of religion and religious phenomena, gives due recognition, at one level, to their essential socio-psychological nature and, at another, to their complex and powerful historical presence in human affairs, in India as elsewhere. Here Karl Marx's fragmentary observations on religion (or criticism of religion) still remain most relevant.

He wrote:

> The foundation of irreligious criticism is: *Man makes religion*, religion does not make man. Religion is indeed the self-consciousness and self-esteem of man who has either not yet won through to himself or has already lost himself again. But *man* is no abstract being squatting outside the world. Man is the *world of man*, state, society. This state and this society produce religion, which is *inverted consciousness of the world*, because they are *an inverted world*. Religion is the general theory of this world, its encyclopedic compendium, its logic in popular form, its spiritual *point d'honneur*, its enthusiasm, its moral sanction, its solemn complement and its universal basis of consolation and justification. It is the *fantastic realisation* of the human essence since the human essence has not acquired any true reality. The struggle against religion is therefore indirectly the struggle against *that world* whose spiritual *aroma* is religion.
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> *Religious* suffering is at one and the same time the *expression* of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sign of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the *opium* of the people.
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> The abolition of religion as the *illusory* happiness of the people is the demand for their *real* happiness. To call on them to give up their illusions about their condition is *to call on them to give up a condition that requires illusions*. The criticism of religion is therefore in *embryo* the *criticism of that vale of tears* of which religion is the *halo*. Criticism has plucked the imaginary flowers on the chain not in order but so that he shall throw off the chain and pluck the living flower. The criticism of religion disillusions man, so that he will think, act and fashion his reality like a man who has discarded his illusions and regained his senses, so that he will move around himself as his own true sun. Religion is only the illusory sun which revolves around man as long as he does not revolve around himself.
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> It is therefore the *task of history*, once the *otherworld of truth* has vanished, to establish the *truth of this world*. It is the immediate *task of philosophy*, which is in the service of history, to unmask self-estrangement in its *unholy forms* once the *holy form* of human self-estrangement has been unmasked. Thus the criticism of heaven turns into the criticism of earth, the *criticism of religion* into the *criticism of law* and the *criticism of theology* into the *criticism of law* and the *criticism of theology* into the *criticism of politics*...

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THE most important conclusion for purpose of my argument is that the criticism of religion and the inter-related phenomena of revivalism and fundamentalism, and communalism, especially as it is also an escape into or aggressive assertion of an identity based on religion, must become the criticism of society that makes religion and the rest of them both necessary and possible.

We also need to recognise that in the history of humankind religion often arose as the ideology and practice of powerful progressive social movements (Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism, etc). That given their religious character and other class-history limitations, these movements in due course lost their positive momentum and that religion, organised or otherwise, increasingly comes to be a conservative, even reactionary factor in social life, manipulated by the ruling classes for their own ends and socialising the common people into a more or less passive acceptance of different oppressive and iniquitous social orders—all this and worse should not lead us to ignore the radical traditions or positive potentialities within religion even today—witness for example, 'the liberation theology' in Latin America and elsewhere. Though, one must add, the recovery and realisation of these traditions or potentialities raises a host of difficult and delicate issues for contemporary radical or revolutionary people's movements, and for good historical reasons religion *as such* can no longer play its earlier progressive role, much less provide the basic resources, theoretical or practical, for any revolutionary reconstruction of society in our times—it can at best only help.

Be that as it may, we must not underestimate the importance of religion as a social force; it has,

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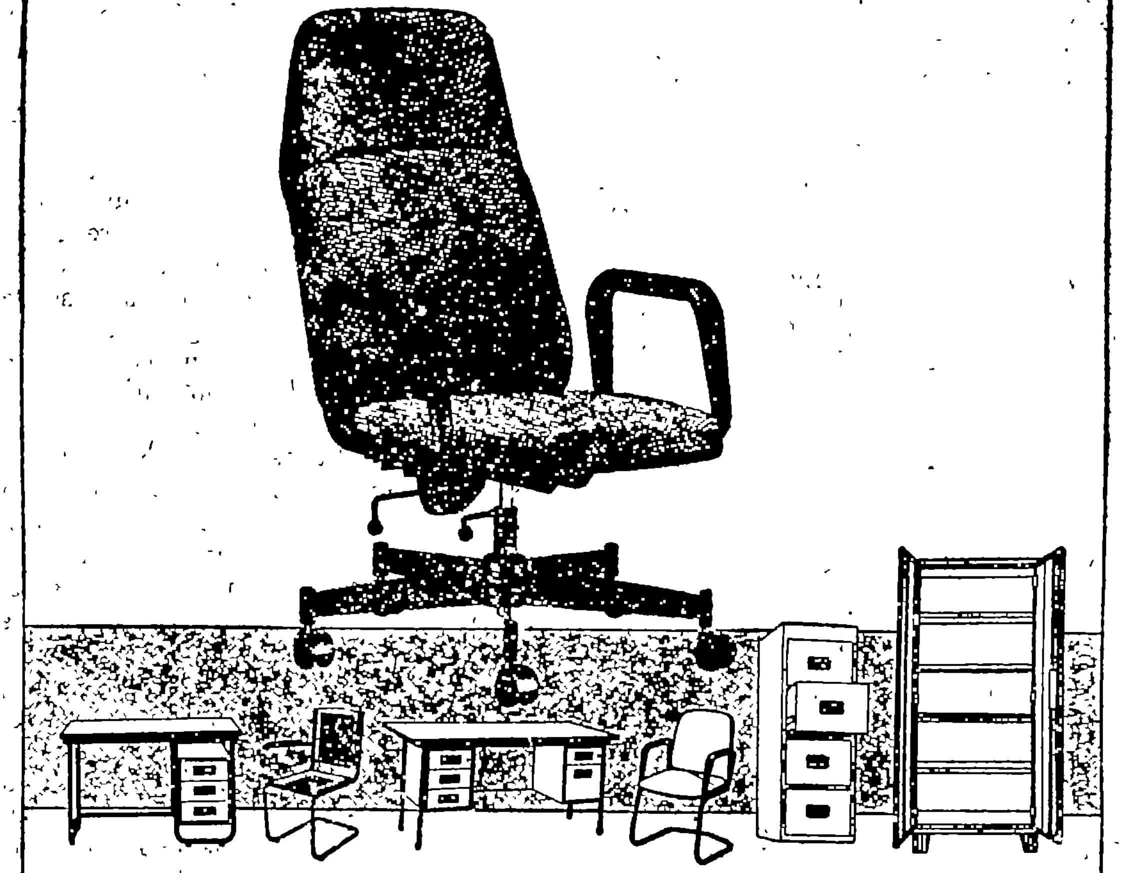

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for good or ill, a continuing reality and rhythm of its own in our society. It persists as a significant element not only in personal identity, but even more so in the cultures of especially the so-called 'Third World'. Quite often it is a crucial element in the culture of the poor and the oppressed. All this suggests the need for a sophisticated, deeper understanding of religion and related matters than is commonly available with the currently fashionable anti-communalism and secularism. A Voltairean instrumental or even genuine enlightenment rationalism, or the seemingly more modern 'scientific temper' view, happy working with its simple dichotomies of 'true' and 'false', or an abstract, essentially ahistorical attitude that mechanistically separates the religious from the secular (including even the social and the cultural) and is inclined to be cavalier or dismissive about issues of religion and religious identity, this will simply not do—however scientific or secular all this may appear to be!

Insofar as religion is an issue, it is this critical but sympathetic and sophisticated understanding of religion which should inform our struggle for secularism in India. It is a long haul, but there is no other choice. In this, as in so many other things, we must have faith in our people's interest and ability to understand. Tactical resilience is necessary but populist cliché-ridden pragmatism will not do any longer. An almost opportunist evasion of real and difficult issues here has already proved disastrous for our people.

I am not here concerned with the problems arising out of the characteristic diversity or plurality of India's extraordinarily rich social and cultural life, or with the emerging, highly visible and valid struggles of the long oppressed and more disadvantaged sections of the Indian people, 'identities' as they have come to be called: minor nationalities or ethnic groups, religious minorities, Dalits, tribals, women, and so on, all impelled to action by an iniquitous economic development, all struggles against an oppressive, homogenising Indian state and India's equally oppressive social structures, and all of them seeking their rights and a place of dignity and honour among the Indian people—a development that drawing attention to the multiform social oppressions prevalent in our society, as against the conventional focus on the economic oppression, has given rise to a virtual 'identitarianism' which is such a significant but problematic feature of contemporary social scientific concerns as well as social activism. I am only concerned with making a brief comment on the question of religious identity.

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THERE is no denying the importance or value of religious identity as a form of community, for the sense of belonging it gives to its members, the social, cultural and psychological support it provides, especially in times of personal stress and social crisis. Man is indeed a social being—and this is not to be understood in the vulgar bourgeois manner but in the profound sense in which Plato argued for it against the Sophists, or, in our times, Marx asserted it as a principle of materialist humanism against bourgeois individualism. Man reaches his humanity and continues to *be*, ever more human, as a cooperative, communitarian being—each 'I' is, as Marx said, 'an intermediary between you and human species'. Community is inside man just as man is in side community. His very individuality is acquired by him from it and 'his life is an expression and confirmation of social life'. Before there is a man, there are men. Or as Marx put it:

> Since he comes into the world neither with a looking glass in his hand, nor as a Fichtean philosopher, to whom 'I am I' is sufficient, man first sees and recognises himself in other men...

The bond this recognition reflects is not something metaphysical or spiritual or even, in the first instance, psychological. It is practical—based on the need to be, to live and to survive. From community human beings receive the atmosphere and sustenance for their short flight on this earth, and through it alone they have an opportunity for whatever immortality is genuinely possible for them. Community, thus, is a positive value. And this is very true of a religious community as an identity, as a histroically-constituted 'recognition', that is, of cooperation and fellowship with other human beings.

But it needs to be immediately added that the range of this 'recognition' is neither pre-given nor frozen or exclusive at a particular point of time. On the contrary, it is always, as already suggested, a historical product. A family or tribe, caste or class, religion or nation, or even gender—it may, one day, well come to encompass, not rhetorically, but in a meaningful sense, the entire humankind in an enriching lap over the invariably overlapping primary or intermediate identities we now have. In the meantime, however, it is well to recognise that precisely because these identities are historically constituted, they carry a whole load of history's

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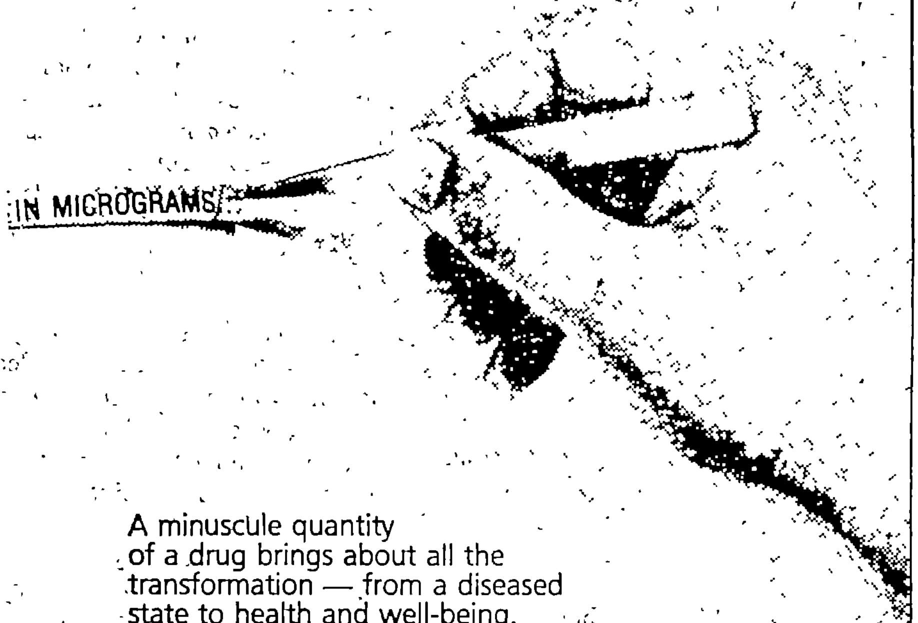

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burdensome baggage also, the mud of their times as it were—they *have* their negative features. A religious identity is no exception—a good example is the status and treatment of women in virtually all religious identities.

In other words, an identity as such is not something sacred, a value in itself—its real-life situation may have all kinds of ugly features *within* that limit or diminish human beings, struggle against which has to be a part of the larger struggle *without* for a more just and democratic social order. A concern for the rights and interests of identities does not mean condoning or perpetuation of these nagative or ugly features: their own injustices, discrimination and denial of rights, inequalities or class divisions, superstitious or otherwise oppressive social peractices and, almost invariably, a vision which is a barrier to seeing things the way they really are, etc. etc.

Democratisation within is in fact necessary if the democratic rights struggle without is to be really effective in the interests of the identity concerned as well as the requisite democratic advance in society, and not remain only an ineffectual holding operation that simultaneously strengthens the hold of the internal vested interests. Equally, it will remain essentially a holding operation, again benefitting primarily the vested interests within, if this struggle, the struggle of any oppressed identity, is not articulated with *class struggle*, if it is conducted in oblivion of the basic economic-structural contradictions of Indian society. For these contradictions even as they determine the basic class oppressions in our society, also condition, most decisively, the working out of the identity-specific oppressions; and their resolution is a necessary, though by no means sufficient condition for the elimination of these latter oppressions also. Such a resolution, however, calls for an united revolutionary movement of *all* oppressed and exploited people, which is not possible without the requisite revolutionary consciousness among them. It should be obvious that it is impossible to develop such a consciousness without a prior and persistent critique of 'the identity-consciousness' which is in so many ways a much corrupted consciousness. All this applies with added force to religious identities, for by their very nature, here more than anywhere else, 'the tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living', as Marx once put it in another context.

These general observations apart, in the context of communalism, there is one aspect of religious identity which requires specific mention. It is of the very nature of an identity that in marking itself out as distinct or different, it divides itself from others. So does every religious identity. In fact all organised religion is essentially divisive of humankind, and more so for the high stakes involved, even if most of them are illusory. But important for the purpose of my argument is not this fact of divisiveness, which is quite natural and obvious, and which many be fed, over time, by all sorts of other factors, including historically produced discriminations, contentions or antagonisms and true or false perceptions of history and contemporary social reality. Really important is what happens to this divisiveness in specific historical conjunctures. Peaceful and coexistent, tolerant, accommodating and even fraternal in one context, it can become explosive and quite murderous in another.

Notwithstanding clichés about religion being about love, and not hatred, or the loud-mouthed *bhai bhai* business, history is witness to unparalleled intolerance, fighting, killing and hating, in the name of religion.* That is why we do not seek the cause of recent explosive emergence of communalism primarily in religion or religious revivalism and fundamentalism, or in religious identities, their history or inherent divisiveness and its sundry ideological manifestations—though all these certainly feed or are manipulated to feed this communalism. We seek this cause in the concrete historical conjuncture, the economic and political matrix of contemporary India.

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THIS brings me to the important issue of the socio-economic matrix of India in its highly significant relation to contemporary communalism—and this matrix is the historically specific form of capitalist development in India. We need to notice its essential logic as a *capitalist* development. Just as, before 1947, the structural logic of British imperialism meant the accumulation of wealth in England and poverty in India, the structural logic of Indian capitalism is most manifest today, as already mentioned, in the creation of 'two nations' in this country in only 'forty years of freedom'. Its historical specificity has given it a strong lumpen or compradore character, presided over as it is by a bourgeoisie born old without ever having known youth, with none of the possible virutes of youth and all the vices of old age. Here all the evils of belated capitalist development, semi-feudalism, bureaucratisation and bloated bourgeois politics daily enter into and reinforce each other. Romesh Thapar once described it as 'some strange kind of corrupted capitalist growth', where, we might add in the words of Marx, 'we suffer not only from the living but from the dead' also.

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*Always more honest than the many who invoke him or speak in his name, Gandhi recognised the grim fact of 'wars in the name of religion', and pointing out that 'these are not confined to Hindus and Mussalmans alone, wrote: 'The pages of world history are soiled with the bloody accounts of these religious wars.' But wedded as he was to a religious-idealist worldview, he did not have the slightest clue to the real historical causation of these wars. He could only urge upon us, once again, 'to discover an underlying unity among all religions', and insist: 'When you look at these religions as so many leaves of a tree they seem so different, but at the trunk they are one.' Thus it has been before Gandhi and thus after him with the votaries of religion—their argumentation always has its quota of such Gandhi-like urging and insistence but, I may add, without Gandhi's honesty and sincerity and, above all, his abiding love and concern for the common Indian people.

Today, every aspect of social life in India bears the signature of this historically specific Indian form of capitalist development—its mark is there on our morality, our culture, our politics, on everything, everywhere. It is there, for example, on our 'national integration', or the so-called 'mainstream' which, bearing the impress of India's corrupt and corrupting, somewhat lumpen capitalist development, is increasingly a dirty mainstream—corrupt, communal and criminalised, a repressively homogenising mainstream. The fact to be deplored is not that we are integrated but that we are integrated the *capitalist* way, which has meant not only general exploitation and oppression of the people but also, and necessarily, an unequal and uneven, development in the country, clearly visible, for example, in the emergence of 'two nations' in India and a certain 'internal colonialism' as well. Such 'integration' therefore carries within it strong disintegrative tendencies. It is not without reason that today, especially in the absence of class-based people's politics, all the identities, all the divides and fissures of Indian society, including the religious, have simultaneously become significant and *explosive*.

What is more, Indian economic development with its structural logic of inequality and unevenness has produced not only 'two Indias' and an ever-widening gulf between the two, with all its disintegrative consequences, but also, together with poverty and hunger and heart-breaking inhuman conditions of life for the vast masses of our people, a society of myriad old and new oppressions, insecurities and alienations, with no jobs or ideals for its youth or vision and values for the people, a society in deep social and moral crisis indeed—*thus providing a continuing social-material basis for the production and reproduction, sustenance and reinforcement of all sorts of religiosity or dharmikta, revivalism, fundamentalism and obscurantism, and also ideologies and practices like communalism.*

(Apropos 'the Punjab problem', for example, it is well to remember that the green revolution, as an integral part of Indian capitalist development, has meant not only 'economic growth' but also sharpened economic disparities, class divisions and social tensions. And in its progress it turned Punjab into a 'chicken-and-whisky-land', giving rise to an extraordinary corruption and vulgarity of life and culture in the State. This, in the absence of a strong countervailing democratic or socialist culture, should explain a great deal about the compensatory appeal of religious fundamentalism, with its harking back to the puritanical traditions of early Sikhism, etc.)

Scholarship on communalism has certainly gained for us a great deal of 'retail sanity' about communalism in contemporary India. But given its strong empiricistic orientation, it has failed to see the 'wholesale madness' which has today come to characterise the Indian society as a whole—its economy, politics, ideology, culture and so on—in which communalism, and 'insanity' itself, has become explosively functional at the present historical conjucture. And it has become so functional today, above all, by virtue of the politics practised by the Indian ruling classes through their diverse political formations in recent years. This is the last issue that I would like to deal with.

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THE Indian ruling classes have always found religion, religiosity or *dharmikta* most useful for reinforcing their hegemony, their ideological dominance and social control over the common people, making easier the latter's continued acceptance of an unjust and iniquitous social order. This usefulness has been well-secured through the typically Indian concept of secularism, defined as *sarva dharma sambhava* (equal respect for all religions), which is in fact no secularism at all—it is far more a celebration of all kinds of religion and religiosity, ignorance, obscurantism and social oppression. Also their political parties have never been averse to the exploitation of religion, or communalism, to a greater or lesser degree, in their struggle for power at different levels in the Indian state.

But even as communalism as also religion and revivalism are there among the people and the Indian society continues to produce and reproduce these in a rich variety of form, expression and use depending upon particular, historically specific causes conjunctures*, the most significant recent development has been the shift of the Congress-I, the major political formation of the Indian ruling classes, to an openly communalist politics under the leadership of Indira Gandhi during her last phase and later of Rajiv Gandhi, the consequent emergence of state-sponsored or condoned communalism, religious revivalism, superstition and obscurantism, particularly the varieties associated with the majority Hindu religion, and the growing identity of Hindu chauvinist ideology with Indian nationalism—all of which has been since, far more naturally, taken advantage of and reinforced by the other, openly communal ruling class political formation, the BJP. Obviously, it is here that the somewhat shaky Indian ruling classes have been seeking, through their different political formations, to a greater or lesser degree, a newer basis of hegemony for their class rule.

The heightening of communalism today is simultaneously the product of social, moral and political crisis in society and the response, of the ruling classes to this crisis. With the older bases of their power and hegemony weakening, they are increasingly turning to communalism in general and to Hindu communalism in particular, to win votes, fragment and divide the people and, above all, secure their continued political and ideological dominance over them. Faced with a worsening economic situation for the people and mounting discontent, widespread violence, disruption and disorder in civil society, and their deepest-ever crisis of legitimacy since independence, the ruling classes are seeking increasingly authoritarian, even fascist, answers to their problems. It is in this overall context, essentially a context of classes and class struggle, open or hidden, actual or potential, that communalism as ideology and practice has become functional, more than ever before, in contemporary India.

This heightened importance of communalism in the politics of the Indian ruling classes may even betoken a certain weakness of character, almost a failure of nerve on their part. For while there are problems galore, an increasing loss of credibility and even significant revolutionary developments in certain parts of the country, there is as yet no real or present threat from below to their political power or class domination. If these ruling classes, or their political representatives, are yet betraying a strong tendencey to scuttle even formal secularism for communalism and religious obscurantism, or,

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*Here is an illustration. Apropos 'Hindu chauvinism', in his introduction to *Anatomy of a Confrontation: The Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi Issue*, S.Gopal writes:

> Hindu chauvinism is an unsurprising counter to the Islamic fundamentalism that is spreading in India and various other parts of the world. Seeking to confront throw-backs to medievalism by modern secular attitudes is a difficult endeavour, far easier to take up similar, backward-looking postures in dealing with the menace. Also, just as the Jews were denounced in Nazi Germany as a threat to the economic prosperity of the nation as a whole, so in India Muslims are today being made the scapegoats of impending decline, particularly of retail and small-scale business, in the Indian countryside. In the riots in Kota in September 1989, those killed were mostly the Muslims who had been once poor but now roused envy because they had been enriched by money from the Gulf. Tamil Nadu has been relatively free of antagonism between Hindus and Muslims; but this record was tarnished by communal rioting in Madras city in September 1990, and it is said that Marwari traders rewarded the hooligans who burnt shops owned by Muslims. In the clashes in the Bhagalpur area in October 1990, not a single Muslim weaver family was spared in the Champanagar and Nathnagar localities, famous for their silk textile production. Nor is it without significance that many of the disputed religious sites constitute valuable urban property. The craving for plunder has not departed with Mahmud of Ghazni.
>
> Such economic greed, rivalry and exploitation draw sustenance from other sources as well. Fundamentalism is an umbrella providing shade to smuggling, drug-peddling and other dubious, anti-social activities. Indians settled abroad, clinging to obscurantist versions of their religion in an effort to salvage their identity in an alien context, have thrown their weight—and funds—on the side of reaction in their home country.....

Needless to add, the form, expression or use of minority communalism or chauvinism is subject to a similar historical specificity. And, the obviously important differences in their situation notwithstanding, the two communalisms regularly feed each other and are equally divisive and harmful to the interest of the common people everywhere, in every community. They need to be struggled against in an equally determined manner. Besides, it is well to remember that the minorities have a greater stake in the secular character of the Indian polity.

It is on the Kashmir soil, that Islam and Hinduism are being weighed now. If both pull their weight correctly and in the same direction, the chief actors will cover themselves with glory and nothing can move them from their joint credit. My sole hope and prayer is that Kashmir should become a beacon light to this benighted subcontinent.

MKGandhi

(December 29, 1947)

M/s Sah Corporation

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for that matter, even formal democracy for an increasingly authoritarian rule, this is indicative not only of a certain degeneration at the core of the Indian political system in recent years, but also of the feudal-colonial inheritance of the new rulers of India, of a certain compradore strain inherent in the character of the dominant sections of the Indian ruling classes, including the Indian bourgeoisie as a whole.

To state the issue in a slightly different, more specific manner: Following independence, throughout the Nehru era, what dominated the scene was politics of the ruling classes, as conducted by their political formations, the dominant Congress-I and the rest, more or less as a 'consensus', a balance of power and interests among them, the beneficiaries of the system as a whole. But after the economic crisis of the mid-sixties, and subject to the continuing constraints of the economic situation since then, this 'consensus' of 'balance' has been lost, that beneficiaries, ever more greedy and grasping, have been violating the rules of their own political game, inside the Parliament or legislatures and outside—and 'democratic politics', insofar as it also provides a basis for the hegemony of the ruling classes and serves as an impersonal, non-arbitrary device for resolving their internal conflict of interests while articulating and promoting these interests as a whole, has been seriously undermined. Ruling class politics, especially because it faces, as yet, no significant revolutionary threat from below, has in fact increasingly acquired a no-holds-barred quality and with its corruption, criminality and lumpenism, its philandering ways and utter unscrupulousness, become a potent threat to Indian democracy as we have known it and a deadly exercise for our people, producing one tragedy after another for them. Here in this 'politicians' politics' (*la politique politicienne*) as Malraux once phrased it, it is truly the end justifying the means—any means including the use of every form of religious revivalism, fundamentalism and obscurantism, and, of course, communalism.

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LET me conclude with a tentative definition of contemporary communalism, even though a definition at best, can be no more than barely suggestive of an understanding:

> Communalism in contemporary India, as ideology and practice, is above all an aspect of the politics of the ruling classes in a society with a massive feudal-colonial inheritance, deep religious divisions, and undergoing its own, historically specific form of capitalist development.

The understanding underlying this definition seeks to grasp communalism in all its complex interconnections, above all the more basic economic-structural and political interconnection that decisively condition the dynamics of contemporary communalism in the interrelated areas of personal life, politics, ideology, culture, etc. And the most important implication, the 'value slope', of this understanding is that to be really effective the struggle against communalism has to be a struggle against *more* than communalism, just as a struggle for secularism has to be a struggle for *more* than only secularism in India.

Our struggle, counterposing people's politics to 'politicians' politics' of the ruling classes, even as it confronts communalism on its each and every specific terrain, has to be a part of the Indian people's revolutionary struggle *against* India's state-supported or more market-friendly *capitalist* development and *for* a just and equitable, people-oriented socio-economic order in India, which in our times can only be socialism, or in more precise historical and theoretical terms a *society in transition to socialism/communism.*

A Note on Concept of 'Hindu-fascism'

It needs to be noticed that communalism is *aspect*, and not the whole of even ruling class politics. Thus its is open to the impact of not only the inevitable shifts within this politics but the ebb and, flow of the country's politics in general, more particularly the people's struggle against communalism and against ruling class politics itself. Here, on the basis of our historical experience, it is possible to hazard the generalisation that the spread or heightening of communalism and related phenomena like religious revivalism, fundamentalism, or obscurantism, is in direct proporation to the depth of the crisis in Indian polity and politics of the ruling classes on the one hand and in inverse proportion to the presence or power of the Left or class-based people's politics on the other.

This generalisation, even as it indicates the correct path of struggle against communalism, is also suggestive of an entirely different kind of possibility. With the deepening socio-economic and moral crisis which has sharpened all the conflicts and contradictions within, and the increasing

We do not believe in a rigid autarchy, but we do want to make India self-sufficient in regard to her needs as far as this is possible. We want to develop international trade, importing articles which we cannot easily produce and exporting such articles as the rest of the world wants from us. We do not propose to submit to the economic imperialism of any other country or to impose our own on others. We believe that the nations of the world can co-operate together in building a world economy which is advantageous for all and in this work we shall gladly co-operate. But this economy cannot be based on the individual profit motive, nor can it subsist within the framework of imperialist system. It means a new world order, both politically and economically, and free nations co-operating together for their own as well as the larger good.

Jawaharlal Nehru

(October 4, 1940)

Sah Brothers

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ineptitude of the rulers whose opportunist practice only ends up creating new problems while turning the old ones into running sores, Indian society and politics are steadily sliding into anarchy and authoritarian or mafia ways. In such a situation, communalism may well come to contribute to the rise of a specifically Indian form of fascism. Years ago Nehru had feared such a possibility and warned against it. Today the possibility is being recognised as a real threat by an increasing number of thoughtful people. We must not be alarmist about it but we do need to have a better understanding of such a possibility. For, almost invariably, this threatening authoritarianism is being misinterpreted: the concept which has gained currency in this regard is 'Hindu-fascism'; at other times it is 'Hindu communalism' which is spoken of as 'nascent' or 'impending' fascism in India.

Such conceptualisation or linguistic practice is not only misleading, it is also harmful to the cause of struggle against both communalism and the possible emergence of fascist authoritarianism in India.

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AT an obvious empirical level, 'Hindu fascism' as a concept ignores the role of communalism *as a whole* in the growing fascisation of Indian society. This is not to deny 'the major threat' that comes from 'majority communalism', or the reality of discrimination the minorities suffer and the need to fight it, or their obviously greater stake in the secular character of Indian polity, etc, etc. But all this does not justify overlooking the very real contribution 'minority communalism' of various hues is making to the daily deteriorating situation in our country.

Furthermore, with its implicit treatment of Hindus as one undifferentiated mass, this concept virtually makes a gift of all those who regard themselves as Hindus to the communal politics of the ruling classes. It certainly makes it that much more difficult to help these Hindus understand—and vast masses of our poor and oppressed are among them—not only that Hinduism, like any other religion today, has no answers to the myriad problems they daily face and share with the rest of the common Indian people, but also that, if and when such a fascism arrives, while it will certainly mean an added oppression for the minorities, they, as Hindus, will not be its beneficiaries they—too will be, like most other ordinary Indians, its victims, only their number, as Hindus, will be the largest among them.

It should also not be forgotten that if there will be something 'Hindu' about Indian fascism, it is likely to have a great deal more of 'nationalism' about it to give it the necessary thrust and legitimacy. Not 'Hindu communalism' but Hinduised nationalism is going to be part of its ideological mask. In our times fascism has often arrived in a typical alliance with chauvinistic nationalism and there is no dearth of such nationalism in our country today. Its rhetoric has already become almost unbearable. To speak of 'Hindu fascism' is to prevent recognition of this extremely significant ideological dimension of the developing fascisation of life and politics in contemporary India.

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THE most important problem with this concept however is that utterly empiricist in registering what is apparent or most visible, it misses out on all the significant interconnections involved and has no explanatory value at all. Privileging 'Hindu communalism' for almost exclusive attention or analysis, as fact, ideology or anything else, it completely obscures what is most important in understanding or explaining any possible rise of fascism in India—its class-basis, the system of class-relations within which it is likely to develop and function, the class role it will be called upon toe perform, etc. etc. As a product of the crisis in Indian polity and ruling class politics, fas cism in India, whenever it comes and whatever the ideological mask, will be another, explicitly authoritarian, form of the rule of the dominant, expoliting classes, just as, in another setting, 'democratic-secular' is the preferred form. It will be a new method to realise the old policies, centred on maintaining the existing class exploitative structure of Indian society. The concept of 'Hindu fascism' simply fails to grasp this vital truth.

Needless to add, such a denouement of ruling class politics in India would indeed be a tragedy for the Indian people—the worst in a long list so far. It needs to be opposed and fought against by all means and at all costs. It can and must be averted. ■

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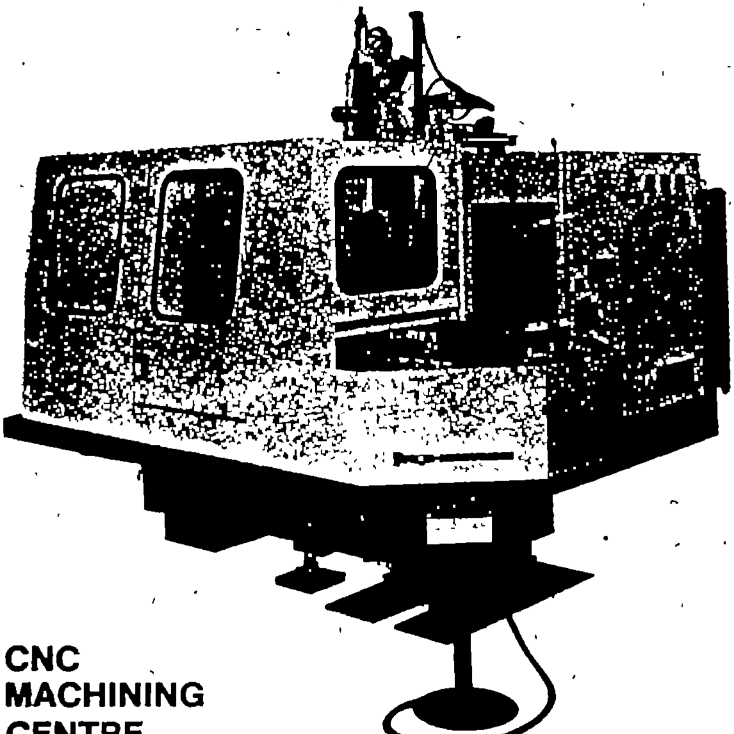

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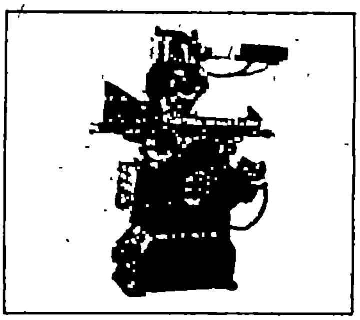

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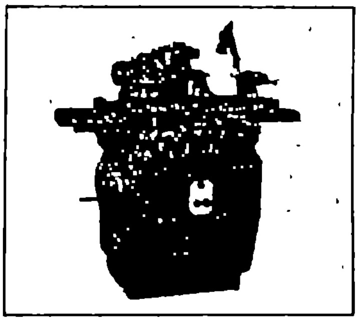

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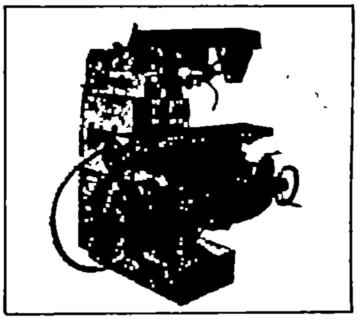

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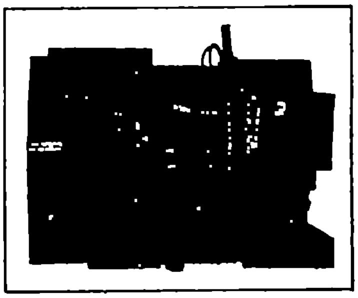

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Science and Secularism

A RAHMAN

Nowadays everyone has become a soldier of God; consequently the secularists are a threatened species. And soldiers of God talk in a manner as if they were really God themselves, hence any meaningful discussion on a rational plane has become almost impossible. I would, however, make an effort to convey how science and secularism are linked together.

In India secularism means different things to different people. It is explained and defined to suit the occasion, often the same person defines it differently on different occasions. Despite these problems, some of our historians have done a creditable job in interpreting history in a manner which brings out the concept of secularism as it should be. My approach would be similar.

In my discussion on science and secularism, I propose to discuss three dimensions. First, how knowledge, even when acquired for religious purposes, becomes secular and comes to serve secular purposes. Secondly, common beliefs about such things as certain diseases, certain practices and explanations about natural phenomena which have come to be associated with one or the other religion, can be explained through scientific knowledge, or the latter could be acquired through research, to give humans the necessary understanding to avoid deleterious effects. Lastly, secular knowledge in the areas of historical, social, political, and cultural fields when developed can give new insights and provide a better understanding of processes and help humans to overcome problems created by narrow and limited approaches conditioned by customs, traditions, and conceptual frameworks generated earlier, and which have come to be associated with different religions.

My own serious effort to understand the nature of and the need for secularism started in the early fifties, when I came across the sayings of two medieval scientists—one an astronomer from Central Asia and another a mathematician from India. Mirza Ulugh Beg, 1443, who was killed by his own son at the behest of the mullahs had said: "Kingdoms disintegrate, religions disappear but the work of scientists remain forever."

The author, who was Founder-Director of the National Institute of Science, Technology and Development Studies (under the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research), is currently the President of the International Science Policy Foundation (Asia Branch). This article is based on a lecture he delivered sometime back at a meeting held under the joint auspices of the Forum for Secularism and the India International Centre, New Delhi.

Haji Abdul Hamid Dehlavi (1413) writes in his text book of mathematics: "Matters of religion are subject to debate and controversy while mathematics is beyond controversy and dispute."

The medieval period was dominated by religious thinking, centred around different religions. The question arises as to why these two scientists asserted what they did? What was their purpose or objective? Both were themselves religious persons and one was a Haji.

The need for assertion in both cases arose, in my opinion, in order to establish the distinctive character of science, outside the framework of religion. The many sects within Islam were all the time disputing each other's claims, and serious controversies dominated the intellectual scene of the period. In the case of Abdul Hamid, India had many religions, and a number of sects disputing amongst themselves and with others, about each other's claims and beliefs.

Further, the argument could be further developed, as was the case with Ulugh Beg, that by regular astronomical observation one could know precisely the movement of heavenly bodies and could on that basis predict, for instance, the rising of the moon, eclipses and other phenomena and build a secular calendar, and develop laws of nature. Such an approach is dangerous, as is evident from the fact the Ulugh Beg was murdered. Why is it dangerous? It is so since it makes people knowledgeable, does not allow those in power to frighten and through fear, subdue people.

Religious Needs and Growth of Secular Knowledge

This is my understanding of secularism, and this is the point which I wish to develop. Let me begin first with the need of Muslims from Algeria to Indonesia and China to find the direction of Ka'aba and develop the lunar calendar to fix the dates of the festivals. It is necessary to develop for the former geography and to know exactly the latitude and the longitudes of the cities. Consequently, we notice during the period of ascendancy of Islam, a major development of geography. But once geography was developed, it was increasingly used for non-religious purposes as well. In fact, the religious motivation was soon superseded by a knowledge function, that is, the spirit of enquiry. The religious use became only marginal to the other uses. In other words, it became a secular area—that is, people belonging to different religions could use it for their own purposes.

What applies to geography also applies to astronomy. In the case of astronomy we have an excellent example of secular effort in India in the eighteenth century by Sawai Jai Singh-II. During his period three calendars were in use, and each one was associated with a religion. They were considered and named as Islamic, Hindu and Christian. Sawai Jai Singh noted the discrepancies of the "Islamic" and "Hindu" calendars and also the developments of European astronomy and endeavoured to improve the calendar so that the observed and calculated dates could tally. Natually you could not associate this calendar with any one religious tradition but a synthesis of the three—in other words, secular.

Incidentally, when India became free, one of the first efforts made by the government was to reform the calendar the Saka Calendar—again a secular effort which took into account the tradition also.

It would be worthwhile, having given examples from natural sciences, to give an example from social sciences. The tradition of collecting the sayings of the Prophet—the *Hadees*—requires that the place and the persons before whom the sayings were uttered should be correctly recorded. Consequently, after the death of the Prophet, his associate, the *sahabis* recorded the whole chain of people before whom the sayings were uttered, and those who related them to others, and those who passed them on to the others. And the record had to be analysed, shifted and veracity indicated. This also led to the development of the science of history and historiography in the Islamic world. This was secular knowledge and provides us with an understanding of social, political and cultural development of the society of the period.

Old Concepts and New Understanding

Let me take a few concepts, for instance, contamination or pollution or the 'concept of purity'. According to Islamic tradition, running water is pure (*pak*) and can be used for cleaning yourself for the purpose of offering prayers. The rivers or rivulets in the earlier times may have been clean and perhaps were good for cleaning oneself. But this certainly cannot be said of an industrial society. The rivers and rivulets are now contaminated, that is, polluted from industrial waste and sewage and one can use their water at one's cost.

The Hindu tradition suggests the pouring quantities of milk with chanting of vedic hymns would purify the water. In fact, this has often been done, according to press reports, for the river Jamuna. This practice cannot be justified on the basis of available knowledge. Pouring of milk is a waste and not desirable when a large number of children, who need the milk most, have no access to it. In order to "purify" or "depollute" the river, one has to know the pollutant—it can be hot water, waste from industrial units, or sewage. One has to know the composition of waste, and the sewage, and for depolluting the type of pollutant, specific action would be required, from prevention to counter-measures. Here once again scientific knowledge becomes the basis of both understanding and as well as action to be taken. This is secular knowledge and used for secular purposes. In other words, under a set of different conditions old knowledge may not be of much use, one has to develop new knowledge and use it for specific purposes.

Let us take another example from medicine. Certain diseases, like leprosy, were considered an infliction of divine wrath for the sins committed by the person and the afflicted persons were outcastes and left to themselves, to slowly waste away and die. It was only the painstaking effort of the scientists which led to the discovery of the cause of infection, and finally the cure. But it took considerable effort by the social reformers to remove the social prejudices against the people which led to their rehabilitation. One could give a large number of such examples, when ignorance, superstition and erroneous beliefs, were removed and corrected through scientific knowledge.

Nearly all the religions consider natural diasters as the punishment of God for the sinners. Droughts and floods are partly man-made and partly due to natural factors. If they were punishments of God for the sins of man, then it is rather strange that, for instance, those who destroy forests are generally upstream and those who suffer are downstream. In other words, those who commit sin are spared and those who are innocent are punished. But how would one explain such natural disasters as earthquakes or cyclonic devastation? There is an interesting story which was narrated by the late D.D. Kosambi. When a part of coastal Saurashtra was devastated during the reign of Rudra Daman, the pandits advised him to undertake *praischit* and perform *yawans* and to feed the Brahmans. The King, however, perhaps thinking the causes to be natural, decided to build breakers to check the tidal wave.

Today on the basis of available scientific knowledge and the communication system, one can roughly predict the event. It is more in the case of cyclones—their intensity, the possible affected area and the time when they would strike a particular area and the duration of the cyclone. This enables those who have the knowledge and the necessary infrastructure and the will, to minimise the impact and the consequences to the people. Our knowledge about earthquake is not as precise as about the cyclones, even here the area prone to earthquakes are known and one could even make an effort to predict.

However, if one goes by the sinner theory then the Bangladeshi's are the greatest sinners because they suffer from major devastations due to floods and cyclones every year and Iranians also as their devastation is through earthquakes. The question remains: why are Bangladeshis punished by floods and cyclones and Iranians by earthquakes? The point is clear—one has to look for natural causes and develop secular knowledge. Further, if the so-called explanations, given by those who consider natural disasters as the punishment of God for their sins then Europeans and Americans are the least sinners, since they are able to minimise the scale of the disasters through predictions and by taking appropriate measures thereafter.

If one looks for secular reasoning for such a phenomenon, then one would realise that the degree of scientific knowledge possessed by a nation or country gives them the necesary power to avoid or minimise the consequences of disasters to human beings. Those who are underdeveloped in science and technology do not have the necessary means and hence suffer. India is better placed in comparison to Bangladesh as far as the cyclonic effects are concerned and Japan is in a better position than Iran in the case of earthquakes.

Secularism and Social and Political Issues

Having given examples from the area of sciences, the question may be raised that secularism being a political, social and cultural concept in contrast to or in place of using religious concept and values, how would one operate and apply it in practice? The latter, particularly in a multi-religious society, where the majority of people are guided by their religious beliefs. In my opinion, this is vital for such a society. This would be evident from a few examples, which I present before you.

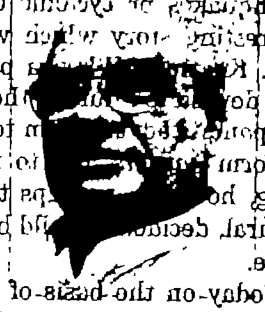
Since the word 'secular' is used in relation to religious tradition, it may be worth mentioning here that religion has two dimensions. First, personal experience and belief; and secondly, social engineering. The belief is personal and its nature and facets are not a matter which could be discussed and debated. The second dimension is part of customs and traditions. These may vary amongst the believers of the same religion and from one country to another, and from one period to another. It is this dimension which is subject to debate and discussion. Customs and traditions are built around the knowledge base of a society in a particular period and linked with the vision of the society, which the ruling elite promotes. The latter are able to organise society on the basis of production and human relations and these in turn form the basis of customs and traditions. Different sections of society may have different customs and traditions. This may be evident, for instance, in India where the role of Brahmans, Khashtriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras was well-marked. A change in the knowledge base and the vision of society may bring about a change—as has happened in India. This change is subject to controversy. The proponents of change base their views and arguments on new knowledge which is secular, while the opponents of change advance religious customs and traditions as a part of their argument.

This is an area which is covered primarily by four branches of knowledge:

i. Political theory, ideology and institutions;
ii. Social and economic structures and institutions;
iii History, its understanding and interpretations; and
iv Culture, including customs and traditions.

These area of study which are now categorised as social sciences, they themselves undergo changes in the course of time in perception, theoretical framework, and in content on the basis of pool of knowledge, tools of investigation, analytical techniques. Consequently, each succeeding generation, which is able to stand on the shoulders of the previous one, reinterprets the past, develops new techniques and methods of judgement and values, standards and norms and this brings about

HARYANA BEARS A NEW LOOK



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- Under diversification of agriculture an area of [illegible] hectares has been brought under sunflower cultivation during 1991-92 as against 18,000 hectares in the corresponding season.
- Haryana is the first State in the country to pay [illegible] Rs [illegible] per [illegible] 1992-93.
- Number of small and rural industries has gone up from 4,619 in 1966 to 1,10,000 and the large and medium scale industrial units have risen from 162 in 1966 to [illegible]
- About two-third area of the State has been declared as industrially backward for the grant of financial incentives to the rural industrial units
- To create more employment opportunities in the rural areas the State is developing small industrial estates known as Udyog Kunj in focal villages.
- Haryana is one of the fore-runner states in the country to provide drinking water facility to all its 6,746 villages by March 31, 1992.
- The daily average availability of power during the current year, upto September 1992 has been 298 lakh units against 269 lakh units in the previous year
- An all-time record supply of 360 lakh units was made on September 24, 1992 as against 351 lakh units in 1991.
- Haryana would get 334 MW from the proposed 840MW Yamunanagar Thermal Power Project on its completion.
- Monthly repair of transformers will be increased from 1,200 to 1,600 by the end of 1992-93
- Education upto graduation level and technical education have been made free for girls in Haryana.
- The incentive of free uniform has been extended to 63,500 girls belonging to economically weaker sections of society involving an expenditure of Rs 88.75 lakh.
- The incentive of free stationery has been provided to 86,600 girl students belonging to Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes on which Rs 40.40 lakh are being spent during 1992-93
- A monthly pension of Rs 100 is being paid to 7.60 lakh senior citizens, 1.64 lakh widows and 37,000 handicapped under the Old Age, Widow and Handicapped [illegible] during 1992-93.
- The number of beneficiaries belonging to Scheduled Castes has increased from 19.68 per cent to 24.38 per cent with the implementation of the new liberalised Old Age Pension Scheme.
- A new Directorate of Women and Child Development has been created to assure dignity of women and quality of life to children for which a sum of Rs 28.42 crore has been provided for the year 1992-93.
- The per capita expenditure on medical care has gone up from Rs 1.90 in 1966 to Rs 69.50 in the year 1991-92.
- The Haryana Government will give job opportunities to 5 lakh youth under the "One Family One Job" programme during the next four years.
- Haryana Roadways is operating 2,000 intra and inter-State routes from 18 depots and 18 sub-depots with a fleet of 3,700 buses covering over 11 lakh kms and carrying more than 19 lakh passengers per day

I extend my heartiest greetings to the people of Haryana on the auspicious occasion of the Haryana Day and appeal them to join hands with the Government and offer their unstinted support in the gigantic task of building up a more happier and prosperous Haryana.

Bhajan Lal
Chief Minister Haryana

Issued by D.P.R. Haryana

a change.

It may be worthwhile to give a few examples as to how the evolution of knowledge can give us new insights and help us to organise a better society, in a multi-religious state, that is, a secular society, based on the understanding and available knowledge.

LET me take the case of women, the most exploited section of the population: let us take the practice of female infanticide, early marriage and *sati*. All the three features are connected with the biological-social understanding of women. Historically speaking, the agricultural revolution was brought about by women, by the knowledge they acquired about seeds and their germination and domestication of animals, while men were engaged in hunting. Their slavery began when due to over-hunting animals became few and men formed groups and organised raids on settlements which had deveoped agriculture and had stored food. They, apart from carrying away the food, also carried away women to do the work for them. Thus began the captivity of women to do the work of men. The post-agricultural society and the feudal society became a man's society, the position of women was one of captivity, to do domestic work and to produce children—preferably male. Larger number of males were required for the armies—to undertake fighting, and to capture the resources of others. Further, since the casualties were quite high due to almost continuous wars, a certain supply of well-bodied males was required. The birth of a female child was considered a reflection on the manliness of man and hence the female child was to be done away with. This has taken now a modern form.

The practice of *sati* was, most probably, part of the earlier practice when men died their property was buried with them, as in Egypt which included the queens, attendants and animals—when men were burnt on funeral pyre, women were also burnt, being the property of men. Or this may have been to avoid giving any property to wife.

Child marriage may be connected with the menstrual cycle in women which in hot climates may start early, and with the incidence of high death rate of children at birth or soon afterwards, due to lack of knowledge and means of preventing child mortality; early marriage may have been started to have the statistical probability of certain number of survivors.

have given simplistic explanations, probable explanations, but the phenomena is complex and requires in depth study, integration of many fields of knowledge, linkage of natural and social sciences and as a result of the effort one may get many scenarios, and possibilities and all these are subject to change, once broad conclusions are arrived at and studies are carried out on the basis of this framework, new light may be thrown on the phenomenon and which in turn may lead to changing of ideas, concepts and so on and so forth.

LET me take another example. The sudden rise and spread of Islam is often explained in very simplistic terms, that is, the appeal of the faith. But if one examines it historically, other factors also seem to have played an important role. A comparative study of religions would reveal that all the religions were:

i. a revolt against the then existing cults and practices prevalent of the then society;

ii. also a revolt against exploitation and injustices;

iii. attracted downtrodden people, people who were marginalised and exploited and provided them a better future.

Islam appealed to the peasants who were burdened by taxes levied on them by the luxurious life of kings, nobility and clergy. This led to mass conversion of peasants in a number of countries. By providing equality and a status in society to artisans and craftsmen it released their social energies. It is, therefore, not an accident that in many countries the peasants and artisans are Muslims and aristocracy may belong to another religion. However, Islam which provided brotherhood and equality for all men, underwent a major change with the conquest of Persia. Islamic society in the early stages of its development had the concept of *majlis* for decision-making, as is evident from the life and times of four Caliphs. After the occupation of Iran, and the conversion of Persians to Islam, Islamic society adopted to Persian tradition of Kings, with all its pomp and exhibition of power, and society was divided with haves and have-nots.

Secondly, in a society where the major source of energy was human labour, the Arabs who espoused Islam became very largely slave traders, supplying slaves for the domestic work, for mines, *karkhanas* and for the army. In fact, the slave aristocracy was built up in the army and occasionally they came to power. In India, for instance, we had a slave dynasty.

In India, the same phenomena had taken place earlier. According to the late Dr. Kosambi, large-scale conversion from Hinduism to Buddhism had similar basis, apart from other factors. Later, when, the Buddist clergy increased in number and also their luxuries, this overburdened the peasantry, and one dimension of their revolt was reconversion to Hinduism.

The point I am trying to make from these examples is that those who practice a particular religion, due to political factors, social needs or economic considerations may adopt practices which, though not part of religion, come to be associated with religion and became a part of the culture and traditions of the followers of a religion. It is these which require change and modification, but create conflict when an effort in made to do so.

The reason for the latter is that those who are against any change, since they have a vested interest in the existing situation or fear that change would adversely affect them, use religion as a shield, and fight against any change in the name of relgion.

This would be also be evident in the case of the fight against untouchability, entry of Harijans into temples or the fight of Muslim women for equal rights.

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THE question which arises is this: why should one change the situation? Why not let things be as they are? The need is generated by the development of knowledge which throws new light and provides a different understanding of issues, problems and things, than what is prevalent. This may be due to physical or biological or political needs. In addition, technological innovations lead to the establishment of new industries, which in turn bring about change in humans and need for new value system, institutions and other relations. For instance, this would be evident from the Indian struggle for freedom. Europeans in the nineteenth century considered themselves superior, and called Africans and Asians as inferior races, colonised them and exploited them. Consequenlty, the freedom movement being directed against this concept and exploitation, showed, on the basis of available knowledge, even though it was generated by the Europeans, that these were invalid and developed alternative concept and endeavoured to promote values aimed at a more harmonious and better society. In all this the base was the use of knowledge as it had evolved and it was used for a well-defined purpose. And knowledge as I endeavoured to show is secular, that is, it cuts across religious or geographical boundaries.

The caste system in India developed a number of social practices. The untouchables were an outcaste group, doing menial work, or scavenging and other dirty work, even the shadow of the untouchable on a Brahman would pollute the latter. Susrut, in his advice to the physicians, advises the latter not to go and see a patient in the *bustee* of *chandals* or receive a messenger who comes from them. The sanitation technology which has been developed in contemporary period has done away with the need of people who do the menial and dirty work. This is now being done with machines and systems developed for the purpose, giving a new opportunity to this group of people and opened up new possibilities for them as a result of scientific knowledge and technology based on it. The common, large scale transportation system has put the Brahman and the untouchables in the same class. The new difference is that rich Brahmans and rich untouchables would travel together. Further, as a result of these possibilities and technologies our concept has also changed. We have discarded the concept as well as the need, thus providing a secular base to society.

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SECULARISM breaks down the apartheid which is created by and practiced by people in the name of religion. In my childhood at stations there used to be *Hindu Pani* and *Muslim Pani*, *Hindu Chai* and *Muslim chai*. This is replaced by clean or unclean water, well made tea, or badly made tea. However, the technology of storing and supplying water to people, through the city water system not only supplies reasonably clean water, but has also secularised it. Further, the people who would be manning the city water system in all probability maybe former untouchables. But nobody now raises this question and Brahmans as well as others used the same water.

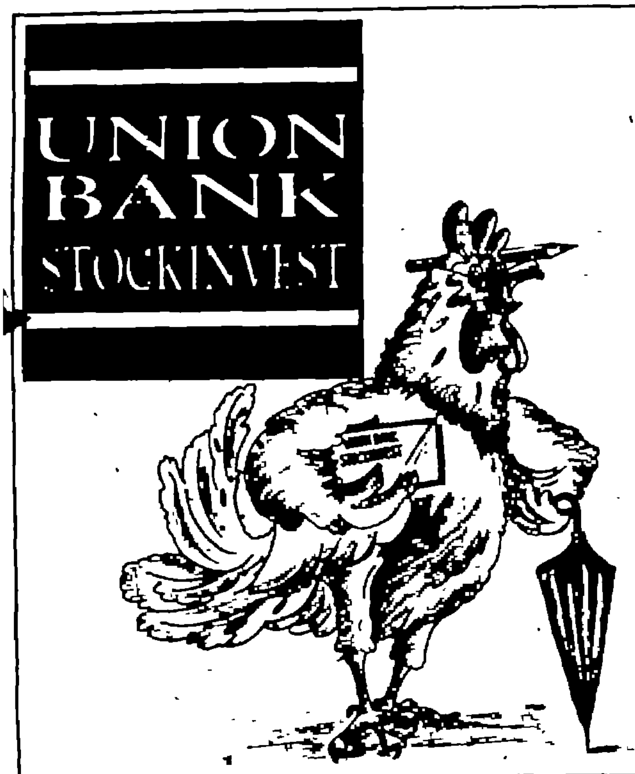
How the lack of observation and sticking to the oral word and the traditional practices associated with the followers of one religion on the other is well illustrated by the story told by William Jones, the founder of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal. He enquired from a Sanskrit scholar and an Arabic-Persian scholar about Spikenard, whether Jatamansi and Sumbul-i-Hindi were the same plant. Both emphatically denied and gave lengthy discourses, about their being different, till Jones produced the plant and asked them to identify, which both claimed in different names. Of course, Jones', objectives was different, but it does clearly indicate what the absence of observation can do—ossifies the knowledge as well as the traditions built on it. This example brings out one feature of human thinking and behaviour, that is, often people form opinion and develop prejuidices against people outside their community, without observing or collecting facts—a scientific attitude based on knowledge can break the barrier and can bring together people who follow different religions or belong to different communities, on the basis of verifiable observation or verifiable facts.

The British rulers in India had termed a number of tribes as criminal. Their perception of these tribes was based on superficial observation, limited understanding and their political considerations. A study of these tribes has now provided a new insight into their origin, organisation, their capabilities and behaviour.

I could add more examples, but the few examples which I have given and explained, rather cursorily, show that people can have different religious beliefs, ideologies or philosophies, but as far as the conduct of human relations, dealing with political and social problems and issues and natural phenomena are concerned one need not ignore contemporary knowledge. In fact, one can use it effectively to interact with each other on the basis of verifiable observations and facts to widen human horizon and to bring about social change and a dynamic culture.

In this context science which is a powerful tool and a major method of understanding nature as well as social phenomena, can be effectively used to cut across apartheids, created by ossified traditions and customs, and bring people together for a common purpose. The role of science cannot but be secular.

In saying so I may also mention that science should be differentiated from scientism—mechanical approach to problems and logical positivist philosophy. Further, the use of knowledge should not exclude compassion, love and affection, sympathy, clarity and other human values. In fact, it is the integration secular scientific approach and these human values which will make science a powerful force, which Hali, the nineteenth century poet, described: It has the power of the hand of God. ■



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Future Prospects of Urdu in India

ATHER FAROUQUI

There has been an extended discussion regarding Urdu as a language and the prospects and potential for its future development in India. A great deal of this discussion has suffered from the general weakness that the issue of Urdu language has been debated in isolation from the wider socio-political and cultural context within which the present status and future development of the language must be decided. On the one hand, some scholars have confined themselves to tracing the history of Urdu and suggesting that as a language Urdu has typical Indian roots and moorings which render its future prospects extremely bright and encouraging. On the other hand, other scholars suggest that Urdu has been a victim of an invidios discrimination which virtually renders its future prospects dismal. No serious attempt has been made to try to place the discussion of the current status and future development of Urdu within the overall context of the changes taking place in the wider society and the changing situation of the Muslim community with which for one reason or another Urdu has come to be associated and identified since independence.

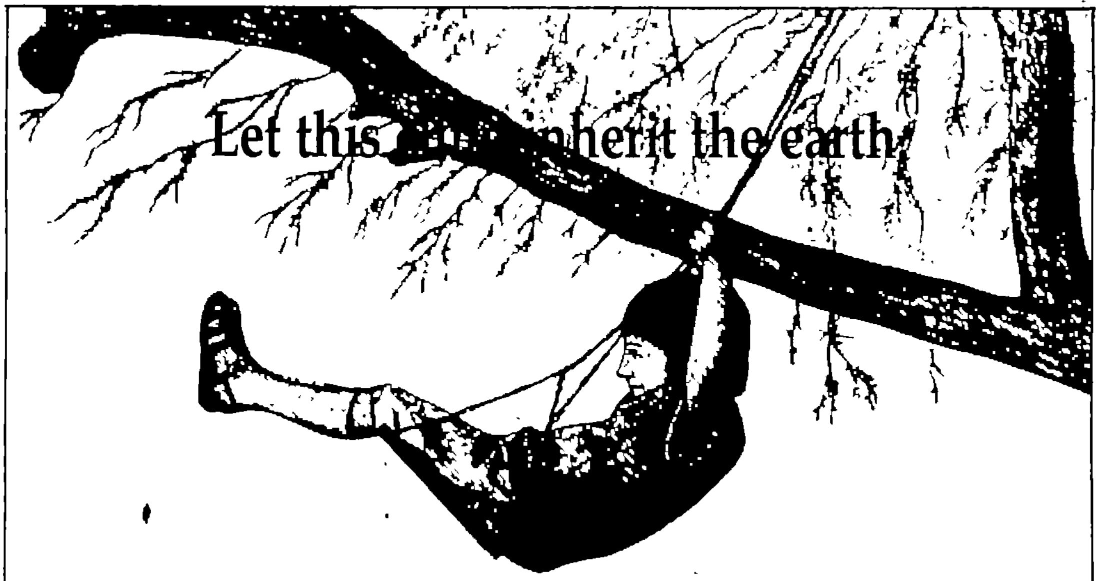
Life and language, including its growth and future prospects are closely intertwined. Languages grow and advance in response to socio-political and cultural changes as well as developments in the field of technology. The impact of socio-political changes in shaping the course of developments and future prospects of a language is ever greater where a language becomes closely identified with a particular social, cutural or religious community and there prevail in society certain prejudices or strong reactions about or towards that community. In such a situation, the development and future prospects of the language cannot be understood satisfactorily without reference to the socio-political and cultural situation of the particular community with which the language is associated in popular perception.

The author is a pioneer-scholar in the field of Urdu education and language in India. At present he is writing his doctoral dissertation on the socio-political aspect of the Urdu language in free India, as a student of the Centre of Indian Languages, School of Languages, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. The author's work on this score is the first of its kind at the university level in post-independence India. This paper was presented at an international conference recently held in Doha, Qatar.

From the time of its origin till independence, Urdu cannot be said to be the language of Muslims alone. Particuarly, after its descent from the military cantonments where it was first spoken, Urdu became the *lingua franca* and was spoken by people of diverse cultural, social and religious affiliations. Even though as a literary language it may have been cultivated and patronised by those who were Muslims by religious affiliation, the fact is that as a spoken language the popularity and acceptance of Urdu cut across barriers of cultural, religious and status considerations. It was only in the latter part of the nineteenth century, after the advent of what has in historical writings been described as the Hindi-Urdu controversy, that one comes across the early and nebulous attempts to associate and identify Urdu with Muslims, conceived as a homogeneous religious community.

After partition the Urdu minority has become more or less the same as the Muslim minority. Even otherwise the problem of the Urdu language is a significant part of the problems of a very large section of Muslim minority in the country. Therefore, while studying the socio-political conditions of Urdu in India it becomes necessary to study the socio-political conditions of Muslims too. While pondering over the problems of Urdu, we shall have to keep in mind that the Muslims are in the majority within the Urdu linguistic minority. Today the Urdu linguistic minority consists also of a very small number of non-Muslims who otherwise belong to the majority community of the country. These non-Muslims studied Urdu in the pre-independence days when Urdu was the status symbol. This small number of the majority community in the midst of the Urdu linguistic minority is ample evidence of the secular and national charcter of Urdu in spite of which it has been victim of injustice and cultural deprivation.

There is a genenral tendency in our country to label as communalist those who talk of the genuine problems of minorities especially Muslims. Many of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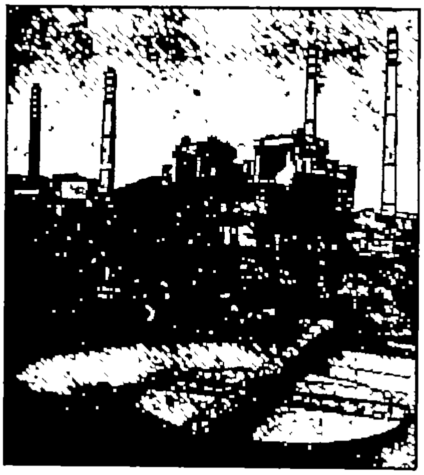

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our political pundits describe such a rational approach towards the problems of minorities as a minority prejudice. Quite a number of documents prepared so far over the problems of Urdu are lying in cold storage. This is because of the fact that the problems of Urdu have never been looked into in a just and scholarly manner in the broader perpsective of the problems of Muslims.

Today, the condition of Urdu is not only very desperate but is deteriorating day by day, though the economic conditions of the Muslims has been improving compared to the past. Here we do not want to indulge in the debate as to why Urdu has been adjudged the language of Muslims alone. But when we look at the partiality committed against Muslims at every stage in independent India, the dispute certainly does not remain complicated and difficult to comprehend. That is why, I feel no hesitation in saying that Urdu and Urdu education may be observed only with reference to Muslims in post-independence India.

Today most of the students getting Urdu education at the primary or secondary level or taking it as an optional subject are Muslims across the country. The discussion of Urdu's association with the question of bread and butter is also connected to this very topic. As we go ahead, the first difficult question comes before us: why is Urdu going downwards in spite of the improving conditions of the Muslims? We have no satisfactory answer to this question till now.

As far as the educational conditions of the Muslims are concerned they may not be satisfactory but are certainly better than those in the past; though the Muslim is a victim of extreme backwardness in every walk of life. There may be objections to the concept of higher education but it cannot be denied that the backwardness of the Muslims in the field of education plays an important role in this regard. Although there are other causes for their backwardness, this point also cannot be ignored. The backwardness of the Muslims in society has a decisive role behind their setbacks in every field. That is why great importance is being laid on the need of arranging Urdu education at all costs. So the problem of educational backwardness of the Muslims is drawing top priority consideration.

As far as Urdu education among Muslims is concerned, the situation is that the middle and upper middle class Muslims are not sending their children to schools imparting education in Urdu medium. The majority of the children in such schools come from poor and backward class which cannot afford high standard education. Perhaps, this is the very reason why the ratio of dropouts in the Urdu medium schools is about 98 per cent in a city like Delhi in which opportunities for Urdu education are comparatively greater. But no conclusion can be drawn on this basis too, because the students going to the *madaris* (schools for religious education) belong to the more backward classes of Muslims and the dropout rates there are not high. The students of these *madaris* leave them only after completing their education in spite of the knowledge that there are hardly any possibility of getting a place in civilised society even after being educated for ten or twleve years in them.

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DESPITE these obvious realities there is no gainsaying that increasingly since independence, at least in the popular mind and perception, Urdu has come to be associated and identified with Muslims and is seen as a language of Muslims exclusively. This singular fact has been a significant determinant of both how Urdu is viewed and what prospects of its future growth and development exist or are likely to exist. For in a sense, what has happened is that a good many prejudices to which Muslims have been subjected in this country against the backdrop of the political history of the last hundred years or more have also been responsible for shaping the prospects and possibilities for the development of Urdu as a language. Given this peculiar, even if unfortunate, objective reality, any systematic assessment of the contemporary status and situation of Urdu language is not possible except by placing it in the context of the changing situation of Muslims in contemporary India. Indeed, the analysis of both the aspects must go hand in hand if the comtemporary status and future prospects of the language are to be understood systematically and comprehensively.

Then the conclusion may easily be drawn that one reason for the complex and multi-layered conditions of Urdu is that the conditions of the Muslims themselves are also complex and multilayered. One interesting aspect of this most complicated situation is that the condition of Urdu in UP is worse, while in Maharashtra and southern India it is comparatively encouraging.

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Urdu was based on the change of Urdu script which has not the least relation to the actual problem of Urdu, that is, its degradation. The most despairing fact is that the advocacy to change the present Persian script of Urdu was most vociferously made by the parties which were not tired of dubbing the Muslims as traitors and consequently this neglected language was further affected in an adverse manner. The populist Muslim leaders took advantage of this trend for the fulfilment of their political interests. Things have come to such a pass that the demand to change the Urdu script invites a sharp reaction from the Muslim community and they feel as if they were being asked to leave their hearths and homes.

In relation to the new social and language perspective of Urdu, no article during the 45 years of freedom has been written to give an honest explanation about the Urdu script. There is only one demand projected in most of the articles writiten about the Urdu script and that is that the Urdu advocates should change the alien Persian script. On the other side, the protagonists of the Persian script also adopt a completely populist policy and give unacademic arguments.

After independence, there have taken place a number of important changes at every level in the Urdu language and literature as well. But it is regrettable that no academic thought has yet been given to them. Under the circumstances, the principal dividing line between Urdu and Hindi remain that of the script. If at any future point of time Urdu were to come to be written in the Devnagari script, the distinction between Urdu and Hindi will virtually disappear. Over the short-run, nevertheless, the question of script remains central to the position of Urdu as a distinct language.

Urdu and Hindi have come close to one another on the literary plane since independence and the earlier tradition of translating and finding Persian and Arabic equivalents of Hindi words and expressions has considerable waned. For example, contemporary Urdu journalistic writings take large number of Hindi words and expressions wholesale and use them as if they were a part of Urdu vocabulary, whereas earlier they would have used equalents derived from Persian or Arabic. Urdu is also read widely in Punjab where the circulation of Urdu newspapers is the highest.

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NO significant study of the complex situation of Urdu has been made till now. Though several scholars of sociology have worked on the problems of the Muslims, they have not laid emphasis on the problems of Urdu which cover a considerable part of the overall problems of the Muslims in India. Therefore, a meaningful analysis of the problems of Urdu is possible only when it is made largely in the perspective of the socio-political problems of the Muslims. The problem of Urdu is typical in its nature because of the fact that it is not confined to the Muslim minority alone. However only superficial studies have been made in this direction which lead us nowhere.

To ascertain the present status and future prospects of Urdu as a language, the present author carried out a survey in north India. This survey was concerned with UP and northern India, but its broad objective was to attempt to study the problems of Urdu in the entire country. As part of this survey the author met about 200 well-known Urdu scholars. Most of them were either teachers in Urdu faculties of different universities, well-known poets or writers associated with distinguished Urdu institutions. The author was astonished to find that, barring a few, those interviewed had no idea of the real problems and their demand for facilities for the progress of Urdu was no better than the thoughtless demands for the Prime Minister's resignation by third rate politicians for every incident occuring far away from the capital. The main point of the survey was to discern whether Urdu had not come to be the language of Muslims alone in the present changed circumstances (may be political) and whether the Muslims would not have to do something to preserve Urdu as they had been preserving Islam in India. It is interesting to note that most of the intlligentsia whom I interviewed were not prepared to accept that Urdu is the language of Only Muslims. On the contrary they said that Urdu had a secular history. Urdu and Hindi are sister languages, and both are languages of India, and so on.

As mentioned earlier, most of them failed to understand the point and those who had an understanding talked as if they had never given serious thought to the problem. The scholars who did grasp the point to some extent only blamed the people responsible for the decline of Urdu. Nearly everyone pointed out one fact in UP: people only waited for the fulfilfment of the government's promise after independence and they themselves did nothing. Criticising the people for doing nothing, most of the intelligentia complained that even the Urdu-speaking public do not educate their children

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in Urdu and regard it below their dignity to purchase and read Urdu papers and magazines. Here two things are worth considering: First, the problem of not educating the children in Urdu is not limited in UP. Such people are found in the whole country. Second, the large mass of the Urdu public consists of people who studied Urdu before freedom only because of its being a status symbol.

One significant question which every Urdu writer has avoided is: whose language is Urdu and what do we mean by the Urdu public? These questions find no frank and free answers in any of the articles written after partition, although there is no denying the fact that all those who have written on the subject know quite well to whom Urdu belongs.

The harsh and bitterest truth generated by political circumstances is that after independence there was not born perhaps any non-Muslim whose mother tongue is Urdu. Political circumstances made this simple question so compicated that it became a never solving knot of philosophy. Things went to such an extent that when the question was discussed to include Urdu in the Constitution, Seth Gobind Dass, a senior Congressman and a member of the Constituent Assembly, put a question as to what was the propreity of including Urdu in the Constitution, and who was the citizen of India who held Urdu as his language?

Pandit Nehru, with voice choked with emotions, gave a politically inspired reply that it was the tongue of his mother and mother's mother. If Pandit Nehru's mother's tongue was Urdu, because her mother's (Nehru's grandmother's) tongue was also Urdu, then what should be Nehru's mother tongue? But the political circumstances of the time had rendered Pandit Nehru helpless to give a direct answer to this simple question. The formation of Pakistan had engaged the attention of the patriotic Indian Muslim to the moral aspect where he found himself guilty in spite of being guiltless. His very existence was in danger. An Indian Muslim dared not to call Urdu his language as it had been blamed for the division of India. Then, how could the Premier of India have courage to take a different stand? Urdu is today recognised as one of the languages in the Indian Constitution but the Constitution recognises one particular Urdu region.

As a matter of fact, Urdu has practically been reduced to be a language of Muslims alone after independence. It is a fact that Punjabis coming from Lahore and other parts of Punjab after partition gave great patronage to Urdu. However, Punjabi and not Urdu was the mother tongue of each one of them. Indeed, they did not educate their children in Urdu as educating the children in Urdu was no longer a paying proposition in the changed context of secular India. Punjabi was the mother tongue of Iqbal and Faiz, the two great poets of Pakistan. But if the mother tongue of Ram Lubhaya Khushtar Girami was Punjabi and he got it indicated in the census, then it is a fact which should be accepted without scruple. After the attainment of freedom only Muslims studied Urdu in spite of knowing well that it will not help them seek jobs but may bring them the blame of being anti-India.

The reason why Urdu is almost dead in UP today, is that it was from UP that most of the Muslims (and elite class Muslims among them) migrated to Pakistan and those who were left here did not count among the educated people. Before independence, the poor Muslims, who were studying Urdu in *madaris*, are doing this even today in the same way.

It is also a bitter truth that when we use the term 'Urdu public', a term popular with all, we have Muslims in our mind deliberately or otherwise. The character of Urdu may be secular. It may or may not be responsible for the division of India. All the elements of its origin including its linguistic structure are Indian. Hindus and to some extent Christians may have contributed to the prosperity of Urdu. Even so, the fact is that in the generation born and borught up after freedom there are few Urdu-knowing people except among the Muslims. When it is rightly or wrongly said that Bihar and south India have kept Urdu alive what is clearly meant is that the Muslims of these region have kept Urdu alive because these regions have Urdu schools established and run by Muslims. In Bihar Urdu has been kept alive by religious institutions which impart knowledge of Islam. If the situation is different in UP it is because Bihar has thousands of such small institutions while the situation in UP is quite contrary, although the students of those institutions after passing their oriental examinations begin to wander unemployed on the roads. As a result the problem became so serious that Urdu had to be given the status of second official language with many legal complications by the UP and Bihar governments. The Bihar experience also made it clear that in the present social conditions of Indian society, the status of second language means nothing but employment to a few because Muslims are backward in every field of life and even the knowledge of the national language is not a guarantee of employment.

During the survey the next question posed to the intelligentsia was whether the Muslims would apply the same methods to preserve Urdu as they had been doing to preserve Islam. Most of the intelligentsia did not want to give answer to this question as it amounted to accepting that Urdu was the language of the Muslims. They blamed the Urdu public for indifference towards Urdu. They cited the examples of South India where there are hundreads of Urdu medium recognised schools although South India has never been the centre of Urdu. In Maharashtra alone, where Muslims have never regarded Urdu as their mother tongue, there are about five hundred rich junior high schools and high schools.

Several other issues are associated with the question: Is Urdu the language of Muslims alone? The most important of them is whether Urdu will have a life of more than a decade or so. If we accept Urdu as the language of Muslims, there will hardly be ten per cent educated young men who may have studied Urdu as an optional subject. Throughout the length and breadth of UP, there is not even a single Urdu medium junior high school or high school (except the Alighar Muslim University's two H.S. schools). The plight of even these ten per cent is worse because no college or university's Urdu Department in UP holds regular Urdu classes. BA standard students of Urdu literature prepare class notes in Hindi. The condition of research in Urdu is worse.

Most Indian universities have opened their doors for research in Urdu. Authentic and standard collections of poems of great poets including Mir and Ghalib are impossible to get, as they have never been published. All the government institutes established for the progress of Urdu are only places of irregularities of every kind and the so-called Urdu intelligentsia go on competing for their membership. The condition of committees fighting for the cause of Urdu is not different from those fighting for Muslim welfare. The sole purpose of these committees is to bargain with the government. The result is that the common man is not ready to cooperate with the committees established for the promotion of Urdu. He has seen the veteran Muslim stalwarts sold at their own fixed price.

Excepting Punjab, the circulation of papers and magazines published in Urdu has come down from millions to thousands and several great magazines are on the verge of collapse and some have already collapsed. Books in Urdu are published by government aided libraries, they are locked up in almirahs beyond the reach of Urdu students.

The struggle for Urdu has neither ended nor is it worthwhile to follow the policies which have constituted to that struggle after independence. The Congress forced Urdu to reach such a sorry state in which it is today and now it is being granted the status of a second language at a time when Urdu language and culture are almost extinct. I am using the word Congress instead of party in power as being responsible for the death of Urdu because the Congress has dominated the field most of the time in free India. As the Congress was well-acquainted with the conditions of Urdu because of its being related to freedom struggle, it succeeded in murdering Urdu. Moreover, the Muslims who opted to live on the promises of the Congress that their religion and culture would be safeguarded, were deceived.

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WHAT then is the solution? The first solution is that Muslims shall have to undertake a complete change in the syllabus and policies of the *madaris*. The contractors of religion who get startled at the talk of reform in the *madaris* while living on donations and alms will have to reorient *madarsa* education so that those who study in them can acquire a degree or proficiency to live in the contemporary changing world and lead a worthwhile secular existence while at the same time ensuring a place in the world beyond.

The Aligarh Muslim University, which has done nothing in the real sense to promote Urdu except open an Urdu Department, shall have to arrange courses in B.Ed. and M.Ed., etc. with Urdu as the medium as is done by Jamia Millia. Throwing away the shell of empty slogans of the so-called greatness of Urdu, the University should be bold enough to face the reality and promote courses of study in a way that Urdu gets its due place in society. Urdu is taught there as a compulsory subject even today, but only on paper. There is no place for Urdu in the life of the University.

The Muslims of UP must keep in mind that Urdu was being granted the status of a second language not as a token of affection for Muslims but for some compulsions facing the then Prime Minister in the general elections. Muslims should also understand well that Urdu is getting its due on account of the changing social circumstances. The generation that has come forward in educational and social life since independence is no longer prepared to carry the burden of blame for the formation of Pakistan and is keen to demand its cultural rights. Thus the government or semi-government institutions set up to promote Urdu cannot be said to be responsible for the latest development in the sphere of Urdu.

Under the circumstances, as far as the question of the future prospects of Urdu is concerned we can conclude with a reasonable degree of certainty that it is precarious. For, after becoming associated and identified with the Muslims in India, the responsibility for keeping Urdu alive has come on the shoulders of the Muslims, and the community's capacity to play a creative role in this connection has been greatly circumscribed. Because of the ambivalent attitude of the Muslim leadership the situation of Muslims in the country is itself fraught with complexities, what to speak of the situation of Urdu. The future of Urdu to a larger extent, is likely to depend upon the attitude of Muslim religious organisations, the South Indian States and the Muslims of Bihar. Personally, I do not see a bright future for Urdu in South India, Bihar and those regions which are today regarded as the new linguistic and cultural centres of Urdu. Except for a few large cities of South India which are the traditional centres of Urdu, it would be unwise to mortgage the future of Urdu to South India and Muslims of Bihar. Urdu intellectuals are often inclined to assert, while discussing the future of Urdu, that North Indian Muslims have dug the grave for Urdu and now it will survive either in Bihar or in South India. The matter is not quite so simple. Urdu has been spoken in South India only to a limited extent and that too in a few select big cities. Therefore, the question of its gaining popularity beyond these traiditional centres will remain an open one.

As a language associated with the Muslims, Urdu has been a victim of the same step-motherly treatment by the government to which Muslims in India have been subjected. One of the consequences of this has been that in comparison with the other minority communities, Muslims have been rendered backward and Urdu is virtually on its way out. Yet another misfortune of Urdu has been that after independence Muslims in India could not develop the courage to wage a struggle for Urdu or Urdu occupied a low priority among the issues raised by the Muslims after independence. For a long time the Muslims kept indulging in self-deception that Urdu will be protected by the secular pre-independence born non-Muslims and the Punjabi migrants from across the border.

As this self-deception also began to be shattered, the Muslims in India now live with the hope that Urdu will live on in South India and Bihar. How fake is this anticipation can be gauged from the fact that the Muslim missionary organisations like the Jamaat-e-Islami have adopted the policy of rendering religious books for North Indian post-independence born Muslims in Hindi and as far as possible in regional languages in South India. Where the local dialects are not advanced adequately for religious literature to be published in them, and this includes Bihar, Urdu is depended upon for publishing religious literature. In other words, even in South India, Muslims are not willing to adopt Urdu as the language of religious propagation. Thus, the use of Urdu even for missionary purposes is restricted to only those areas where its use involves no possibility of a language controversy.

The situation today is different. Hyderabad and other States are no longer there to patronise Urdu. Further, what will be the linguistic scenario of South India and what linguistic issues will emerge difficult to say at present. Religion, language and regional identity have taken many turns and twists during the last half a century. East Bengal was separated from India on the basis of religion, but after the emergence of linguistic and regional conflict the break-up of Pakistan is not more than two decades old. Equally, to expect a predominantly rural and backward State like Bihar dominated by an elite ethos to perpetuate and protect Urdu would be unwise.

Through reorganisation of religious educational institutions (*madaris*) which are present even today in substantial numbers in North India not only can Urdu be saved but the pace of spread of education among Muslims can be accelerated. This process of reorganisation can also be extended to other parts of India. By linking the system of *madrasas* to an influential all-India religious movment like Tableeghi Jamat the network of such schools can be utilised for promotion of Urdu. However, this would call for great courage because linking Urdu education to the *madrasas* would also not call for substantial resource the mobilisation and it would also be easy to relate the large majority of backward Muslims to education in the name of relgion. The problem of reorganisation of *madrasa* education has been a subject of discussion among Musims at all levels for nearly a century and the efforts are unlikely to meet with resistance. On the whole, thus, in today's secular India the guarantee of Urdu's future survival paradoxically depends upon its ability to rely on religion and religious institutions. ■

IN SEARCH OF INDIA'S RENAISSANCE

Volume I

The summary of the discussions at the National Seminar on Nation-Building, Development Process and Communication in Search of India's Renaissance provides a comprehensive insight into the problems facing India today, and highlights some of the possible ways of working towards solutions. In a sense it is the quintessence of the thinking of Indian intellectuals from different disciplines. The Seminar was jointly organised by a number of institutions and was inspired by the eminent thinker, P.N. Haksar. This volume contains the precis of nearly 80 papers presented at this five-day seminar and the interventions of a few hundred participants from all over the country. These papers are being published in the second volume.

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On the issues arising out of the National Seminar, 35 grassroots seminars have been held in 20 States of India. More than 3500 social and political activists, school teachers, academics, social and natural scientists, lawyers, physicians, journalists and public servants participated in these seminars. An equal number attended as observers. Various grassroots organisations as part of hundreds of voluntary agencies organised these seminars. Rashpal Malhotra, Director, Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development, Chandigarh, coordinated them. A status paper has been prepared on the basis of the discussions of these grassroots seminars highlighting the felt concerns of common people all over the country. This status paper alongwith this volume will now constitute material for a national debate in a forthcoming seminar.

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Garib Must Go, Not Garibi

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

A decision of utmost significance has been taken by the government to ban beggary in the capital of India. Beggars would be rounded up and pushed out of the Union Territory of Delhi. So, the beggar has to be out of sight of those who rule this country—our President and his Ministers, our parliamentarians and our judges. All the three appurtenances of state power—the executive, the legislature and the judiciary—are to be quarantined from the ugly sight that is discomforting.

Not that this is something unique and unprecedented. In Marcos' heydays in the capital of the Philippines, beggars were out of bounds on the orders of Imelda, who was the real boss of Metro Manila. Because, Imelda was anxious to put up the best possible appearance before the outsiders, particularly the American overlord and to show him, how beautifully the dictator and his consort were managing the affairs of the Filipinos. It is indeed necessary to doll oneself up to be acceptable to the patron.

The sight of the beggar disturbs us, for he reminds us of the poor and the dispossessed who happen to be the majority in our country. The beggar, after all, reminds us about the burden of unfulfilled promises made so lavishly at the time of the elections. That ruffles our temper, upsets our mood and so spoils the good life that is being planned for the upper set in our society with the funds borrowed so lavishly from the super-moneylender abroad. What a shame would it be if after lending us millions and billions, the money-lender finds that we have not banished the beggar—at least from our immediate view. It is like the dirty figure in tatters hovering round the grand feast of the affluent. That apparition must go: it has to be removed—because its presence brings back into memory what we have long tried to get rid of—and that's a thing called conscience. For we are out to design a society divested of conscience.

No doubt many important arguments would be forthcoming why the beggar has to be banned—many of them are guilty of stealing; they carry disease and so their presence poses a health hazard; they are hired by racketeers who make money out of their begging. In one word, they are what we conveniently term, anti-social. Don't all these make a good case for their banning? Once the police cracks a whip on them, they will not come, and this way will be stopped the streams of migrants trekking out of the countryside in search of food and job.

And such a clamp-down is urgently called for because the government knows more than anybody else that the prices would neither go down nor stabilised but will continuously go up, and that sets into motion the migration from the village to the city. So, if their passage to the city—the capital in the first instance—is blocked, we shall be able to force them to stay where they are and not come and disturb us in our nice and clean cities. And for the radical critic, the government's answer is that by paying a tip to the beggar you don't help to change the system. Fight inequities in seminars and conferences, let it not invade our paradise islands of good life that our structural adjustment programme is seeking to build so faithfully.

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THROWING the beggar out of the precincts of power is a significant pointer to the new edifice of culture we are trying to build. We do not intend to ban lavish parties and money thrown away recklessly in what's officially called, conspicuous consumption. And who are the people who indulge in such profligacies? The *nouveau riche* and not the established high society who wallow in such vulgarity—the contractor who thrives on bribing his way to big money, the speculator, the smuggler and their kins. These are the conduits who are destroying decency in our public life. But there is not even the remote intention of our rulers to ban them from the capital. Rather they have become the fearsome denizens of this beautiful city. The beggar must go, but the blackmarketeer must stay. This is the new order we are setting up.

Fortyfive years ago, when the country became independent, our new rulers pledged in all solemnity that they would strive to wipe off every tear from every eye in this land of plenty. They did strive to build a new mansion, which helped the wealth to grow. But the poor and the underprivileged did not get their due share of that wealth. Which was cornered by the rich and the powerful—whether in the city or in the village. And as a result, the gap between the rich and the poor has widened so much so that we have instead of integrating our society have helped it to disintegrate into two compartments altogether—two worlds with differing outlooks, perceptions and problems. Here is a classic case of wealth mishandled led to dissonance and not an integrated society.

The rulers became a bit disturbed, because such disparity might lead to tensions which might threaten their throne. So, an elaborate exercise has been gone into to pacify the dispossessed. On one side we have got the scores of the so-called anti-poverty programmes, and on the other our rulers at election times would go to the villages, promising to ban poverty. *Garibi Hatao* became the election battle cry. But the *Garibi* did not go. Rather beggars became more numerous on the downtown streets of our metropolitan centres.

And today we are engaged in bringing in a new set of reforms—our new economic strategy borrowed from the armoury of History's biggest moneylender, which will intensify this division in our society. The rich, at least a section of them, will become super-rich, with their own standards of good life, an outlook as wide as the sky TV will enjoin and a degree of insensitivity towards poverty which shatters any social conscience. At the other end, the non-rich will become poor and the poor will join the dispossessed in millions upon millions. In such a society, what else can one expect but the physical pushing of the beggar out of one's sight? Hoping that anything out of sight would help to keep it out of mind.

No, the removal of the beggar from the streets of Delhi would not help to remove the curse of poverty. It is a peculiar curse, this curse of poverty. It hits not only the one who is its target but also the one who pronounces it.

Twenty years ago, a shrewd politician coined the slogan *Garibi Hatao* to win votes she desperately needed. Today, twenty years later we find that *Garibi* has not gone away—it has come to stay put and threatens to come nearer and nearer. Hence, instead of *Garibi Hatao*, our rulers are now calling for *Garib Hatao*.

■

An Old Ghost's Grouse

"Academician dead", said a headline above a short news item in a major newspaper in the second half of September. The report referred to the death of a Calcutta historian, Professor Deba Prasad Ghosh.

Professor Ghosh, said the report, was a brilliant scholar. Evidently his brilliance had made itself apparent early, for he had been selected as a Premchand Roychand Scholar of Calcutta University—which is like being picked as a Junior Fellow at Harvard or MIT.

But let us look a little more closely at the word "academician". We find it used rather loosely. The right word for a college or university teacher or scholarly person is "academic" (used as a noun; it is also an adjective, of course). There is a great deal of difference between an academic and an academician. An academician is a member of the Royal Academy of Arts in Britain, or the Academie Francaise in France or the (former) USSR Academy of Sciences. In terms of achievement an academician is only a rung or two below a Nobel laureate. In France an Academician is referred to as an Immortal. In the erstwhile Soviet Union an Academician was entitled to the privileges of a minister but commanded certainly greater respect.

Thus any teacher of Ramjas College or Bhagalpur University, while being an academic, cannot be called an academician, any more than a municipal councillor of Meerut or Mehsana can be described as a statesman.

The orginal Academy is the school where Plato taught. It brings to mind Raphael's great painting "The School of Athens". By a strange quirk of fate so many girls' schools and coaching shops today are academies!

Anyway, for journalistic purposes, "academic" has an advantage over "academician". Apart from being correct, it saves three letters.

H.Y.S.

Contours of Change

SUMIT CHAKRAVARTTY

Nine months ago, at the beginning of February this correspondent was engaged in an absorbing discussion with a Western journalist in the picturesque Swiss resort of Davos where he had gone to cover the Indian Prime Minister's participation at the annual international symposium organised there by the World Economic Forum. The topic under scrutiny was the tragic break-up of Yugoslavia accompanied by the heavy loss of life and property in the seemingly unending hostilities along ethnic lines. The journalist presented a comprehensive account of the background to the unfortunate happenings in that country and then pointed to the irrefutable fact that the breath-taking changes that had shaken the world in the last three years culminating in the collapse of totalitarian regimes in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, while being highly welcome on account of the triumph of the democratic spirit over medieval autocratic repression, was, nevertheless, characterised by the ascendancy of the far Right across the globe.

At that point of time that indeed was the case. The sudden return to power of John Major's Conservative Government in the UK upsetting all the initial poll forecasts and thereby writing the political obituary of the Labour leader, Neil Kinnock, was indicative of the persistent surge of the far Right the world over. However, things have definitely changed since then if recent events are any indicator on this score.

That the failure of Jonas Savimbi, the rebel UNITA leader (for long years generously helped by the Right-wing Western Governments, besides South Africa, in their bid to oust the Marxists from power in Luanda), to dislodge the Angolan Government at the hustings was not a flash in the pan was quite evident from other developments in other corners of the globe. In Lithuania the former Communists (who, however, have left much of their ideological baggage and can hardly be described as Stalinist by any stretch of imagination; they have nothing in common with some of the active neo-Stalinist 'Communist' groups led by Victor Anpilov and Nina Andreyeva in Russia) have staged an unexpected comeback through the ballot—and in the process completely baffled, humiliated and snubbed the Western oriented anti-Russian Lithuanian leader, Landsbergis—on a social democratic platform resisting the calls for instant snapping of all economic links with Moscow. In a completely different setting the victory of Bill Clinton over George Bush must also be viewed as the assertion of liberalism over the conservative far Right view manifest in Reagan's theatrical acrobatics and Bush's odious "moralist" overtones barely hiding narrow hegemonic designs of the US Administration.

If the economic factor was most crucial in Clinton's spectacular success—and the new occupant of the White House has openly announced that improving the domestic economy for the benefit of the ordinary Americans would be his primary task—then there is every justification in endorsing the view of Arvind N. Das (brilliantly underscored in his article in *The Times of India* on November 4), that Clinton cannot but conclude after the verdict that "people are at the centre of the economy and, therefore, employment and quality of life, security and health care, education and the arts are all legitimate, and indeed necessary, areas of state activity".

A year ago the far Right had felt reassured by Boris Yeltsin's reinforcement of power and the exit of Mikhail Gorbachev from the centre-stage of politics in Russia after the Soviet disintegration. Today there is a definite shift in the attitude of the Russian people. Perceptive observers in Moscow have, while interpreting Yeltsin's panicky responses to Opposition activity (the latest being the banning of the National Salvation Front, an unholy alliance of Russophile chauvinist-fascists and neo-Stalinist orthodox Communist forces), pointed out that there is no public alternative to Yeltsin as yet and that is the card which he can still effectively play against all his adversaries; but that he is on a far weaker wicket today than ever before is undeniable.

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A brief visit to Moscow following a media seminar in Alma Ata, the capital of Kazakhstan, convinced one of this distinct shift in the temperament of the people. "We, Russians, usually oscillate from one extreme to another. Now it appears that the first steps are being taken towards restoring the balance," a Russian journalist remarked in Alma Ata while exchanging views and information with this correspondent. The validity of this observation was borne out by what one saw and heard in the Russian capital.

In a considerable measure this shift in public mood has been brought about by the phenomenal economic hardships forced on the people at large by the Yeltsin-Gaidar "shock therapy" that has been marked by freeing prices and full scale efforts at privatisation (which, however, has not been proceeding smoothly on account of a variety of factors) resulting in hyper-inflation. Nevertheless, what needs to be realised is that unlike last year (this correspondent was in Moscow in November 1991) when practically nothing was available in the shops, today everything is available in roadside kiosks—at exorbitant prices no doubt, but not absolutely prohibitive since the clientele of buyers is not insignificant. This does not, however, mean that impoverishment on account of the so-called "shock therapy" is invisible: it is clearly manifest in the sizeable number of beggars lining the underground passages leading to or inside the metro system (although their number has not grown substantially more than the beggars one found a year ago). But it needs to be underlined that because of their legendary stoicism and resilience the Russians are still able to conceal the extent of backbreaking burden they are forced to endure.

As Boris Kagarlitsky, a key figure of the Left and noted anti-Stalinist Marxist intellectual functioning as one of the most articulate leaders of the Party of Labour (whose founding conference took place in Moscow a month ago, on October 10), informed, "there is a growing anti-Americanism among the people now" and that is taking place simultaneous with the mounting mass opposition to the IMF. "Just walk along the streets and you will find more and more anti-American graffitis on the walls. Even in the city centre you find these graffitis. About half a year or a year ago these would be immediately wiped out spontaneously by people who did not agree with them. Not anymore. The people were very pro-American a year ago. But not anymore. Because the Americans did everything to generate anti-American feelings around the country," he asserted.

Elaborating further he said:

> They (the Americans) appeared with dollars not respecting local habits, not respecting the way people really live and so on. They are rich and mostly very ignorant of the way of life of our people. They are also very arrogant.
>
> The point is that the Russian people feel: We were a superpower. Now nobody respects us anymore. People feel bad, feel awful about that. They don't want once again to be a superpower. But they want at least to be respected once again by the rest of the world. That's a growing feeling and that's one of the reasons for the increasing sense of anti-Americanism in the country today. Because the Americans behave like the winners and that is what the people do not want to swallow.

Kagarlitsky did not hide the fact that the public approach was not shared by the government whose different wings, especially the Russian Foreign Ministry, were totally subservient to the West in general and the US in particular as was transparent in the Russian voting in the UN in favour of disqualification of Yugoslavia from the world body. Historically Russians have never been against the Serbs and vice versa. Today that history was being forgotten by the Russian Government, he lamented.

Kagarlitsky's view that public opposition to the IMF was on the rise was corroborated by the fact that even Yeltsin in an interview (carried in *Frontline* on July 3, 1992) had stated:

> We are easing on the reforms somewhat, even at the expense of some of the pace. We cannot agree to a number of demands of the International Monetary Fund first and foremost because we do not want to jeopardise the economic reforms. This also concerns the lifting of all controls on fuel and energy prices in one go. We cannot simply agree to that and turn the other way.
>
> There is a certain limit to the decline in living standards. It cannot be crossed in any way unless we want to suffer disastrous social and political consequences.

When his attention was drawn to that statement Kagarlitsky said:

> That was done in the wake of the first wave of anti-IMF feeling in the country. As a demagogue Yeltsin immediately realised what he had to do and he was just reflecting the popular mood in Russia. But, nevertheless, he carried out all the IMF sponsored policies.

Asked to illustrate the anti-IMF feeling among the people, he replied:

> It's very easy for anyone to get spontaneous applause in a rally: you just have to blame the IMF for all the follies on the economic front and immediately the audience starts applauding. This is the scenario at least in Moscow.

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KAGARLITSKY spoke at length about the role of the national bourgeoisie, that is, the local entrepreneurs producing goods for the domestic market, who were feeling left out and threatened by the onslaught of foreign capital, who wanted the public sector to grow as they felt that then they too could hope to grow under the umbrella of the public sector; the declining strength of the neo-Stalinists and chauvinists (who could hold rallies ten times bigger than the Russian Federation of Trade

Unions—with which he is associated—a year ago; but not so now) whose mobilising capacity showed at best eight to ten per cent public support (for example, Kagarlitsky predicted a 10,000 strong neo-Stalinist rally in Moscow on October 24—but in reality 5000 odd people turned out according to press reports); the increasing strength of the Russian Federation of Trade Unions and Party of Labour; the prospects of the Civic Union (of Alexander Rutskoi Arkady Volsky and Nikolai Travkin) coming to power with Volsky as the Prime Minister through trade union support [for which intense bargaining is going on based on three conditions: (i) holding elections to Parliament in three months of formation of government; (ii) limiting privatisation and renationalising some industries and concerns dealing with raw materials and high-tech; (iii) adopting an anti-IMF international orientation with the objective of launching a global struggle against the IMF with Third World support; and the Civic Union, according to him, was finding it difficult to accept the third condition].

On ties with India Kagarlitsky said:

> While the Indian Government is becoming more and more pro-US in many respects, at the same time we know that Indians and the Indian Government would like to have more cooperation with Russia. That would be an objective factor of more independence from the West for both our countries.
>
> That is exactly why the Americans are so hostile to the cooperation between India and Russia. You are well aware of the US reaction to the Indo-Russian rocket deal. That is just one case. It happens any time somebody here wants to have more cooperation with any Third World state of any real importance. The Americans always come out against it because they know that it makes Russia more independent from them and also their other partners more independent. So in that sense we have to encourage economic cooperation with a country like India and give a call: "Look South" in terms of economic expansion.

Kagarlitsky's statements were by and large tinged with a sense of realism.

> How much do we count? For one thing, we are getting more and more support among the public opinion; on the other side to a very limited extent from the political establishment of Russia because the whole political establishment here is Right-wing and as far as the Left is concerned it is very marginal.
>
> But one of the reasons why we insist on the new elections also is because ... in this case there would be a definite shift to the Left :... in Parliament and the society as a whole .... Almost everybody agrees on that. Even the observers who are hostile to us say that we have some chance of getting important positions if there are any elections or democratic processes. Without the democratic processes the Left is going to be marginalised. We thus have a chance of allying with the forces which are definitely interested in promoting the democratic processes. So in that sense the issue of democracy is very much becoming the issue of the Left.

He also provided a significant revelation about the people's changing attitude to events. "An opinion poll survey by a very Right-wing Russian TV newsprogramme *Viesti* conducted about a month ago showed that about 67 per cent of the people surveyed were positive about socialism and 18 per cent were negative about socialism while 15 per cent were undecided. Since *Viesti* is very anti-socialist this was most striking. And *Viesti* was very negative about the result of the survey, saying that the Russian people don't deserve freedom. But this too is a reflection of the public mind in Russia."

◆

SEVERAL of Boris Kagarlitsky's opinions were hotly contested and disputed by democrats but on substantive issues they were not. Alexander Alexandrovich Evlakhov, a distinguished observer in the journal *Rossiya*, who had exposed the CPSU's financial transactions and material support to other Communist Parties (including those in India) and furnished documentary evidence to that effect, claimed that the CPSU's financial assets had all been transferred to the Communist Party of Greece (recently at a CPG Congress two participants from Russia—Victor Anpilov and Nina Andreyeva—had been given 500 dollars each as allowance, he alleged).

But what he said about the IMF was most interesting:

> There is a growing awareness now that it (the IMF) cannot be a life-saving device—it could help a lot but it is only through our own efforts that things would be actually done.
>
> Even if the IMF would give us hundred times more assistance, it can't possibly restore our industries—we have to do that on our own.

Evlakhov was fully supportive of the present government. "We wanted a government of younger people, we wanted *a government caring for national interests*, and we want the government to create conditions in this country that would attract foreign investment." (emphasis added).

In this context he referred to the cancellation of Yeltsin's visit to Japan and said the step was taken "because he (Yeltsin) couldn't ignore the section of opinion that exists in Parliament".

◆

THE scenario is undoubtedly confusing with several friends of India—notably Sergei Strokan of *Moscow News* and Tatyana Shaumiyan of the Russian

Institute of Oriental Studies—strongly criticising the government for the total lack of Russia's foreign policy with different people speaking in different—that is, diammetrically opposite—voices. They also sharply attacked Prime Minister Igor Gaidar for saying that Russia was a partner of the US. Such statements ignored the importance of Russia's ties with the Third World and India, they insisted.

Yet one found a balanced approach in the words of Alexei Pushkov, Deputy Editor-in-Chief of *Moscow News*. While assailing the Communists in Russia for not striving for "another form of democratic society like, for instance, the Italian Communists do since they are much closer to the Social Democrats and Labour Parties" and calling for "seizure of power and organisation of the society under the old model", he said like the Italian and Indian Communists functioning within the constitutional framework, "Communists should be a part of the system to correct its malfunctioning because they are strongly in favour of social issues as well as ecological issues in some countries and I think they play an important role in this. Because the capitalist society cannot be left without a Left Opposition since then, like any monopoly, it creates a situation of corruption."

He then added:

> I think it was Lord Ester who said: "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely." That being the case if the capital holds everything in its hands and there is no counter-balance it would be absolutely corrupted. So in this context the Communists have a role to play.

Asked if India occupied the lowest rank in terms of priority since *Moscow News'* orientation was pro-West, Pushkov said:

> Our orientation is pro-West to the extent that the former Soviet Union was anti-West .... We want to correct this, we want to strike the right balance. We don't say that Russia should limit itself only to its ties with the West. And we don't think Russia should play only the Western card in its foreign policy. ... *Moscow News*, in my opinion, has been consistent on this point: without taking any anti-Third World stand we say that Russia should have a balanced international position. The West should be a very important part of it but the Asiatic component of this position should be very important too.

Moscow News was not consistent in its attitude to the Third World. Pushkov was on the defensive when asked about an article that appeared sometime ago attacking the liberation movement in South Africa. But it is true that of late the publication is giving unbiased reports on foreign (African) students and has even criticised the West (the US in particular) for supplying substandard products in the name of humanitarian assistance to Russia.

◆

THE future is daunting. Kagarlitsky forecasts that 1993 will be the worst year of recession. He also predicts that Gaidar's ruinous strategy on the economic front could lead to the country's (Russia's) disintegration which is why he wants a change and a Civic Union Government headed by Volsky, a former party bureaucrat close to Gorbachev, interested in slowing the pace of reforms in order to protect the vulnerable sections of society. Dr Algis Prazauskas, who has studied the ethnic problems in Russia and India in depth to make a comparative assessment of the two (he had in 1989 predicted the break-up of the USSR), is also quite pessimistic though he refrained from issuing alarmist signals.

Mariam Salganik, a noted writer-intellectual, openly charged the inhuman barbarity of the Stalinist state structure with having resulted in the present-day sick society in Russia, and highlighted the importance of Yeltsin's decree extending to the prisoners of Hitler's concentration camps the same status and facilities as war veterans thus making belated amends for yet another of Stalin's sadistic crimes. She was certain that it would take years for Russians to come out of that past.

Yet in their own way all the three were hopeful of a reasonably bright future. It is the reassertion of the democratic spirit, despite all the pitfalls, that stands at the basis of that hope. And notwithstanding the mounting economic hardships.

Mariam (or Mira as she is known widely) was confident that "this country will never go capitalist in the old Marxian sense". Why? Because first such capitalism was non-existent today and secondly the "old Russian ideas of collective psyche of the people will eventually produce social democracy along the lines of Germany, Austria, Sweden". She pointed to a danger: "it could peter out into a version of Columbia". And then hastened to add: "But Columbia never had this kind of intellectual potential we have in this country."

In the ultimate analysis, she was convinced, the "new thinking" of Gorbachev will be restored in place of Yeltsin's narrow, subjective, personalised idiosyncrasies. She was delighted to know that Nursultan Nazarbayev, the Kazakh President, had on his own and unwarrantedly hailed Gorbachev as a "historic figure" when Yeltsin was seeking to attack and corner the former Soviet President.

All these bear testimony to the fact that in the overall context Russia (and the former Soviet Union) with all its tribulations is gradually moving towards a new balance in step with the latest trends in the other parts of the world. ■

India's Self-imposed Isolation in GATT

SUMAN SAHAI

The government's most frequent refrain when explaining its inability to protect India's interests in international negotiations has been that we are so isolated on this or the other issue that we cannot fight the developed countries who are attempting to impose unjust, unreasonable conditions on us.

Whether it is the issue of intellectual property rights or investment measures or any other field where Indian interests are being jeopardised, the government cowers behind the plea that it cannot fight since no one else will fight on its side. This isolation is not only a shameful foreign policy failure, it is to a large extent self-induced.

The Indians have managed to stick the knife in their guts through sustained negligence and bungling. While the rest of the Third World looks to India for leadership to withstand the assault of the North, the Indians with their formidable scientific-industrial base, viable economy and stable political structure are content to fritter away chance after chance to defend their interests and those of the Third World.

My experience with the government's attitude has been through the 'Gene Campaign', the group fighting to protect the the Third World's genetic resources and the rights of the Third World people over these resources. The Gene Campaign's position is that the government must reject every form of intellectual property protection on genetic resources that will infringe on the rights of farmers and scientists; that innovations through genetic engineering can only be rewarded in some way if the labour and innovations of the Third World farmers is also compensated and that access to genes must be linked automatically with access to technologies that will be based on them.

These are by no means unreasonable positions. They not only find resonance in other developing countries, but have also been supported by all kinds of groups in the industrialised countries, like academics and students, environmentalists, lawyers, voluntary organisations, politicians and political activists. The entire Green movement including all Green parties vehemently oppose patents on life. Large sections of the Social Democrats and even Conservatives have expressed reservations about the patenting of genes and life forms. It is worthwhile asking why the Indian Government has done nothing to build support amongst these groups. Why it has never entered into dialogue with the local pressure groups who on their own were fighting against gene patents.

I have lived in Heidelberg for many years. Now I return every summer semester to teach genetics, in order to fulfil the requirements of my faculty position at the University there. This time during the three months spent in Europe and the US, I devoted considerable time to lobby support for the Gene Campaign's position and trying to make people understand the reasons why patent claims on the genetic resources that belong to the Third World amount to theft and cannot be sanctioned by a civilised society.

While in Heidelberg, I was invited to address the members of the European Parliament. I spoke there of the inviolable rights of the Third World farmers over the resources they have created and that the effort of multinational companies to monopolise these resources cannot be allowed since it constitutes institutionalised theft.

In later discussions with members of the various committees dealing with the patent question, I found that many were against patents in this domain and fully agreed with the South's position. Several members said they failed to understand why the Indian Government was not resisiting such an obviously exploitative move, despite being in a strong position. It would have been logical for India to seek support in countries like Canada, Mexico and the European Community, all of who have strong pockets of anti-patent feeling, instead of wringing its hands and wailing about being isolated.

In addition to my lecturing at some universities in the US and Germany on patents and the exploitation of the South, we also conducted signature campaigns at these universities. Scientists in Heidelberg, Bonn and Berlin in Germany as well as academics and students at the universities of Columbia, Harvard, Madison, Yale and Chicago in the US, supported our stand against patents in this area.

Although there was sometimes a lack of awareness about the deeper nature of the problem and its implications, once people were told about the rights and claims of the South, there was understanding for our position. Protagonists of patenting in the North have been gaining public approval for their position by saying that if industry could not protect

Dr Sahai is the Convener of the 'Gene Campaign', the group set up to defend the Third World's rights over genetic resources.

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its investments by the guarantee of patents on their products, it would be unwilling to make these investments, implying that development would suffer.

I made it my task to inform people about the South's viewpoint. That there was another side to the story. That the raw materials of the investment in agriculture and biotechnology, namely, the genes, are being misappropriated without compensation, from the South who are its actual owners. Once that came through, support for the South's position swelled.

Support for patents on life forms was fragmented at best, even in the US where opposition is less vociferous than in Europe. In most places, strong ethical objection is an important component of the debate. Almost all religions and cultures in the North acknowledge that God alone can own life. The concept of granting ownership over life-forms through patents, to companies or people is an idea that most people find reprehensible. This again is a card we would have played effectively, linking an ethical/moral objection based on our deeply conservative ethos and our religious-cultural heritage, with the current of ethical objection existing in the industrialised countries.

Indian missions in all industrialised countries should have been instructed to engage in a propoganda blitz, hammering home through all available media, why we oppose gene patents. Pro-Khalistan terrorists have used this method so effectively in developed countries that in their heyday it was the Indian Government, not the terrorists, who were seen as perpetrators of atrocities and violators of human rights. Instead of using their special privileged position to exploit the print and electronic media to make their point, Indian missions are poorly informed about major policy documents or negotiations and are ignorant about the people who organise and head protest in areas of interest to us.

It is indeed regrettable that successive Indian Governments have made incompetence their hallmark with respect to most aspects of the GATT negotiations. Nor is it right to fault just the present government. The brief episodes of V.P. Singh's and Chandra Shekhar's flirtation with governance, as well as Rajiv Gandhi's tenure since the opening of the Uruguay Round in 1986, have all contributed to India being isolated when there was no overwhelming reason for this to happen.

Had India done the only sensible thing and cultivated the strong streams of sympathy existing in the North, it would not be in its self-proclaimed and self-engineered isolation, at least not in areas where it has a strong, undeniable moral claim, like with genetic resources. The point is that if a small organisation like the Gene Campaign can mobilise support in defence of Indian interests, the government with its massive resources and infrastructure could have done it on a ten times larger scale, had it wanted to.

The future of the Uruguay Round is uncertain once again. An outcome could be postponed indefinitely if the European Community and the US fail to reach an understanding on the nature and volume of agricultural subsidies, the dispute over which is the single largest impediment to the conclusion of the Uruguay Round. The Americans will be ready to resume negotiations after their Presidential election is over.

The Europeans, however, are in a state of turmoil over the uncertainty surrounding the fate of the Maastricht Treaty and the recent shock of the narrow French "Yes" to a unified Europe. Matters are not helped by recalcitrant French farmers who are not prepared to accept subsidy cuts. It is unlikely that in this uncertain and hostile political climate and with the clout of the farm lobby, the Europeans would be able to slash agriculture subsidies. All this could mean postponement if not collapse of the GATT talks.

Should that be the case, India gets a new lease to do some of the things it should have done since the beginning. Since foreign policy cannot be based on unexpected windfalls however, the government should register its intention to renegotiate controversial clauses right away. The Gene Campaign had submitted a report to the government prepared after detailed and intensive discussions with the policy-makers and experts. The report titled "Dunkel Draft: Suggestions for Minimum Must for Renegotiation" indicates the clauses most detrimental to Indian interests that should be reopened.

A recent development in Europe has given a fillip to the patents on life controversy. In May this year, the European Patent Office extended patent protection to a special mouse developed by the Harvard University, despite Article 53 of the European Patent Convention which forbids the patenting of plants and animals. With this ruling, protest has flared up in a renewed and more vigorous form. Old groups have become more vocal and new groups have come up. A "Munich Declaration" initiated by a group of patent lawyers and supported by voluntary groups and political activists, has called for a ban on patents on life.

The mood is ripe in Europe for India to open renegotiation on this issue and register its protest. Not everyone will want to oppose the Americans, the protagonists of patenting, but the current mood is most favourable. In this atmosphere, it is likely that other developing countries would overcome their fear of the US and join. India has a new opportunity to forge a flank against patents on life forms, from which it stands to lose so much. Let it make up for lost opportunities by siezing this one.■

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The following are a few articles by eminent public figures published in Mainstream *over the years.*

Kashmir and National Integration

SHEIKH MOHMAD ABDULLAH

The State of Jammu and Kashmir is the symbol of the lofty ideals of secularism, democracy and socialism to which India is wedded.

We made our choice in 1947 and took the momentous decision to throw our lot with India for the preservation and growth of the values we cherished. We demonstrated our unstinted, deep-rooted and unflinching faith in these values nourished by the sacred blood of our martyrs, in the hour of trial when the entire subcontinent was engulfed in the flames of fratricidal communal strife.

We staked everything and our people stood like a granite rock to face the onslaught of the ferocious storm of communal frenzy. We fought courageously and with a death-defying abandon for the survival of the glorious heritage of human brotherhood, communal harmony and tolerance handed down to us as a valuable legacy by our ancestors.

We won the battle with laurels. Mahatma Gandhi, whose martyrdom will continue to inspire successive generations to uphold the banner of secularism and the cause of the emancipation of the oppressed and the downtrodden, saw a ray of hope only in Kashmir when his soul was tortured by the spectacle of unprecedented brutality and insanity elsewhere. Our people can never forget the Mahatma who preferred to lay down his life to allowing himself to acquiesce, without protest, in the desecration of values which alone lent a meaning and a purpose to his life of dedication to the noblest of all causes.

Bapu is immortal and continues to live in our hearts and guide us in our journey to our destination. History will bear testimony to the fact that our people have not betrayed the trust he reposed in them. We have carried out his behests and redeemed the pledges we made to him creditably and with utmost devotion and loyalty. We salute his memory with the reverence that the great and fearless crusader in the cause of truth deserved.

Kashmir belied the hopes, expectations and calculations of those who had thought that terrorisation, vandalism, arson, loot and naked aggression would succeed in coercing us into submission. The fortress of secularism proved invincible. It could not be stormed and destroyed by either the propounders of the pernicious two-nation theory, or the forces of aggressive Hindu communalism.

The bastion that was further fortified by the blood of martyrs like Mohmed Maqbool Sherwani, Master Abdul Aziz, Soom Nath Bira, Pushkar Nath Zadu and hundreds of others—most of them anonymous—is impregnable. This reality dawned on the protagonists of the cult of hate too late when they had already paid a very heavy price for their misadventure aimed at imposing on us by force what was repugnant to us and what we had repudiated and rejected earlier so clearly and unmistakably as to leave no scope for any doubt.

History has vindicated us. The principles which formed the cornerstone on which the edifice of our mass movement stood have emerged triumphant. The two-nation theory which we had opposed tooth and nail as something quite alien to the revolutionary and progressive concepts that evolved during the course of the advance of the organised movement of the toilers, the exploited and the have-nots in our State, has suffered a colossal scuttle.

The perversity and the intellectual bankruptcy of those who suffered from delusions and, perhaps, naively believed that they could defy the inexorable laws of social development and history stand unmasked. The fallacy and hollowness of their logic have been laid bare by the experience of life and the events which do not admit of any distortion to suit the pathological obstinacy of cramped minds which refuse to learn from the life or which do not have the capacity to see through their mistaken beliefs and notions.

It is not my aim to narrate the history of the people's movement in our State in this short article. This is a long story marked by many milestones which are of decisive importance and historic significance. Our people have gone through the mill of a protracted struggle and tread a path full of thorns, ravines and stretches of deserts, sometimes without any visible traces of oases. They have seen moments of triumph and glory as well as those of dismal failure, despondency and rough weather, with no perceptible silver-lining on the horizon. But they have never lost their heart. They have continued to adhere to the chosen path with remarkable tenacity, patience and the conviction born out of a deep faith in the infallability of the values that have acted as the pathfinder in phases of darkness and gloom.

We are determined to combat communalism of all varieties and complexions. We are convinced that the complete rout of communal forces alone will ensure the achievement of the objective of national integration.

The political and economic values we formulated and the objectives and aims of our movement we enunciated are enshrined in our political Bible—the programme of

"New Kashmir". It is a socialist programme, envisaging the establishment of a just and equitable social order in which there is no scope for the exploitation of man by man or for parasitism and for the appropriation of the resources and wealth of the land by a privileged class to itself.

This programme inspired millions of our people irrespective of their religious affiliations and beliefs, to rally round the banner of revolt against a decrepit, decadent and callous autocratic regime sustaining itself with the might of guns and bayonets.

Partition of the country took place when we were still withering away in the dungeons and jails of the autocratic regime and our struggle for our freedom was continuing. We tested the alternatives open to us on the anvil of our political and economic values and decided to join hands with the secular, democratic and progressive forces in India in order to be able to successfully implement the socialist programme to which we were deeply and irrevocably committed.

By virtue of Article 370 of the Constitution of India, our State got the right to convene its own Constituent Assembly and to frame its own Constitution. Our own elected legislative organs were authorised to frame laws suited to our conditions. This particular Article in the Constitution of India pertained to and had relevance with regard to our State alone. The psychological factors that made themselves worthy of consideraton as a result of the horrifying experience of the partition of India and its aftermath were not lost sight of by the framers of the Constitution. The instrument of Accession had conceded only three subjects, that is, Defence, Foreign Affairs and Communications to the Centre.

The experiment of the functioning of Indian democracy was to be put to test in a region with a predominantly Muslim population and so situated that it was constantly vulnerable to the political-ideological offensive, propaganda and influence of Pakistan as well as to that of Hindu chauvinistic trends in India, which did raise their ugly head again and again, and created difficulties for us by polluting and poisoning the political atmosphere in the country. Apart from this, it was a strategic area surrounded by some neighbours whose interests did not coincide and who could not be expected to ignore its geographical importance from the point of view of their own national interests.

Many other considerations of an important nature weighted with the experts when Article 370, which is inseparably linked with the accession of our State to India, was incorporated in the Constitution of the country. We had to face challenges which perhaps no other part of the country had to, in view of the fact that a State which had come into existence as a result of the partition of India was laying a claim to our terrotory on the basis of the application of the two-nation theory.

Our movement, though a part of the mainstream of the anti-imperialist national liberation struggle, had certain distinct features and peculiarities of its own.

What did we gain by having a special status inside the Union of India? We convened a Constituent Assembly to give our people a democratic Constitution reflecting their urges and aspirations as embodied in "New Kashmir".

The Constituent Assembly abolished the institution of hereditary rulership and substituted it by the principle that the head of our State be elected by the legislature of the State. The Constituent Assembly also abolished parastic landlordism without compensation, thus dealing a big blow to feudalism. These were great achievements and all the progressive and democratic elements in the country hailed these revolutionary measures. The popular government in the State headed by me, freed the poor and the downtrodden peasantry from the stranglehold of vicious parasites by putting an end to the evil system of usury.

Many other progressive measures were taken and we were steadily moving in the direction of the implementation of our socio-economic programme. The reforms of far-reaching significance we had introduced could not be set at naught by invoking articles of the Indian Constitution pertaining to property rights.

Our Constituent Assembly was sovereign and, hence, even the highest judicial organs in the country could not be moved for relief by the expropriated landlords and other exploiting classes who had hitherto enjoyed positions of vantage in our political and economic life. Where such remedies were sought, these were not available, as the decisions of our Constituent Assembly could not attract the relevant provisions in the Constitution of India. The Fundamental Law framed by a sovereign body could not be called into question as violative or *ultra vires* of the Constitution of India.

This was a big gain in the positive direction of bringing about fundamental changes in our socio-economic structure. We had the unique distinction of being the first and the only State in India to boldly embark on the revolutionary path of social transformation.

Our special status and our ability to initiate the process of implementation of the pledges we had given to our people further strengthened the bonds of fraternity between the people of our State and those in the rest of the country, already cemented in the fire of common struggle. It fortified the process of the emotional integration of the people in this part with the rest of the country despite the sentimental and religious appeals of the rulers of Pakistan who had geared their propaganda machinery and put it into constant operation to spread the virus of communalism in our State.

Our values stood the test of time and the integration of our people with the rest of the country came to stay as an indestructible phenomenon.

The radical measures we adopted for the uplift of the weaker sections of our society earned us the wrath of the vested interests and the arch-reactionaries in the State and the country as a whole.

The Jammu Praja Parishad agitation was the result of the conspiracy of those elements who were desperately trying to torpedo our radical measures so as to ensure the perpetuation of the *status quo*. They were fighting to rescue the institutions of hereditary rulership and landlordism. Their sentimental slogans of full integration of the State with India were only a smokescreen to cover up their reactionary aims.

In reality, their vicious designs, masked under chauvinistic phrases, were meant to undermine the faith of the Muslim population of the State in Indian democracy by fostering a sense of insecurity among them. They were thus acting as the avowed enemies of national integration.

They are even now engaged in the nefarious activity of sowing suspicion and doubt in the minds of the people of India and creating a scare among the elements which occupy positions of power at the moment in our State, in order to defeat the purpose of our dialogue with the Prime Minister of India.

What happened in 1953 when I was unceremoniously deposed as the Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir State with cynical disregard for constitutional propriety, and incarcerated, is a tragic event which is past history now. I would refrain from commenting on this and other events that followed it. Now that we have opened a new chapter in our political life, thanks to the sincerity of purpose on the part of Smt Indira Gandhi, subjective attitudes, feelings of rancour and injured sentiments should not be allowed to act as a retarding factor in the process of reparing the damage that the cause of national integration has unfortunately suffered as a result of certain mistakes and errors of judgement.

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I have been trying to promote a new congenial atmosphere free from all bitterness so as to instil fresh confidence and faith in our people in the values that formed the basis for the linking of our destiny with the mainstream of the national life.

Experience has proved that the mere enactment of laws by questionable methods constituting the very negation of established democratic processes and norms, and their incorporation in the Statute Book, is no substitute for the union of hearts and the spontaneity of feelings of comradeship and brotherhood.

Ours is not a parochial or regional chauvinistic approach. There should be no difficulty in comprehending the fact that the denial of democratic rights to a people whose sense of pride and dignity was rudely hurt and the prepetuation of the technique of repression combined with doles and bribes has not been able to achieve the objective of national integration.

I had earned the love and adoration of millions of my countrymen in abundant measure. This was a glowing tribute to the political maturity, sagacity and the high level of consciousness of the people of our State.

I have also gone through the experience of a systematic campaign of character assassination being organised against me and my name being associated with treason, treachery, and betrayal. I was denounced as an enemy of national integration, a secessionist and a separatist. An objective appraisal of events would easily convince any genuine patriot or democrat that the allegations and accusations levelled against me were all motivated by animus and malice and were baseless.

Tragically enough, my detractors did not seem to understand that they were actually working against the cause of national integration which they apparently professed to uphold. Let us forget and bury this sad chapter now.

I have declared time and again in unambiguous terms that the cause of national integration is so dear to my heart that I am prepared, without the least hesitation, to make the supreme sacrifice for it. My whole life is an open book and bears testimony to the fact that I and the people of our State have unwaveringly and steadfasty held aloft the banner of secularism and national integration even in face of the gravest provocations.

What must, however, be appreciated and understood is that national integration is a voluntary process and it can have a firm and unshakable foundation when there is a restoration of values common to all our countrymen and the regeneration of an atmosphere of mutual confidence which flows from the full satisfaction of the legitimate aspirations and urges of the people of our State.

All apprehensions and misgivings will be allayed and will get evaporated, yielding place to enthusiastic and active participation of our people in the democratic processes of the country and their identification with the forces of progress, once the barriers of prejudice and suspicion get demolished and we are determined to further deepen the understanding we had arrived at in 1947.

The assurance of a status of dignity and honour to our people inside the Union of India in terms of the principles fortified by the Constitution of the country will strengthen national integration which we have jealously guarded as the apple of our eye against the onslaught of aggressive communalism, chauvinism and Reaction.

Let us all make our humble contribution to expedite the accomplishment of the task of forging full national integration and defeating the disruptive forces of all hues and shades and fissiparous tendencies that undermine the cause of the unity and integrity of our great country.

(Annual 1974)

Politics of Succession

RAM MANOHAR LOHIA

Barring us, Socialists, all Opposition politics in the country today have degenerated into succession politics.

Opposition parties seem to have decided that the task of changing the attitudes of the people is far too difficult for them; or will at any rate take a lot more time than they think they can spare. The Prime Minister, according to them, is old and the Congress Party will soon have to find a successor to him. Who this successor will be is an open question—at least, so it appears.

Opposition parties seem to have made this internal problem of the Congress Party their own. They think they will be able to direct the country's affairs their own way if they had a Congressman at the top who would be their man or at least allied to them.

The Communist Party and similar other groups are therefore backing a nominee of what they would call Left Congressmen—whoever that might be—but for the moment the person appears to be Mr Krishna Memon. They would not, however, be chary of supporting Mrs Indira Gandhi, should that choice become inevitable.

Summit Politics

The Praja Socialist, Swatantra Party and presumably also the Jan Sangh are backing someone from among what they would call right-minded Congressmen, or whom I would, for the purpose of this classification, call Right Congressmen. At the moment, this choice is so entirely open that the name of Mr Morarji Desai alternates with, let us say, such a name as Mr Kamaraj Nadar, almost every other day.

This, according to me, is a most disgraceful situation. It is particularly disgraceful for those who have so long believed in radical and revolutionary politics. Summit politics is politics of intriguing and manoeuvring or getting on top somehow. Such politics is perhaps inevitable in a country like France or England, where the people are firmly set in their political convictions, almost as they are set in their religion. The Indian people are still new to their political convictions and open to change. For Opposition parties to have given up the task of stimulating change in the attitudes of the people is therefore an ignoble surrender.

Succession Gossip

Furthermore, where is the base for summit politics? Whenever I come to Delhi, a sense of overwhelming despair seizes me. There is no fundamental question of theory or even of enduring politics. One has nothing but gossip about succession, interlaced with spicy stories of what the Other Side has been doing in connection with money, women, or foreign relations. The worm is eating into Delhi's heart.

I had foretold several years ago that the likeliest successor to Mr Nehru would be Mrs Indira Gandhi. That was on the basis of what I knew of the Prime Minister—who, I regret to say, at one time was my leader and teacher—and also of what was actually happening in the country and inside the Congress. The reports I have with me since then, particularly of how Mrs Gandhi came to be the Congress President, have only confirmed my prophecy. At that time I had only known the actors in the drama rather well and not how they actually conducted themselves backstage. I may add my personal reaction to it. I would prefer Mrs Gandhi to anyone else in the Congress Party, if for no other reason than this, that my morning paper would give me a pretty face to behold.

I daresay there are sections in all the parties that I have named—Communist, Praja Socialist, Jan Sangh, perhaps also Swatantra—which are distressed at this situation. They would perhaps like to do something about it and take politics to the people. But they just do not know how to go about doing it. I can talk a little definitely of the Praja Socialists, for I know them very well. Large sections of them are distressed and unhappy. But they have skated on the thin ice of opportunism and compromise so long with their leaders that any bold decision has become almost impossible for them. I guess that a somewhat similar disease has taken hold of the radical wing of the Communist Party.

Ungainly Mirror

The Indian Parliament has become a perfect, although a very ungainly, mirror of this situation. Without meaning the least offence to its position, I have to say that it hardly grapples with things of vital importance to the people. Call-Attention Notices or Adjournment Motions come up, so it seems, with a view to providing the government, and particularly the Prime Minister, with an opportunity to demonstrate how brave and wise the government is. Continued motions on the Chinese or Pakistani aggression, without the slightest move this way or that, appear to have become endemic in Parliament. A few Socialists there are who try to raise fundamental issues, but I must admit that our party is yet ineffective—I hope only for the time being.

I have already roused a lot of anger and earned the displeasure of friends by raising the issue of the Prime Minister's personal expenditure. Some people think that I have personal animus against the Prime Minister. That is wholly untrue. If there is one man who wishes a long life for him, that is me, although my grounds would be none too palatable to many in power today: I would want democracy in India to become so strong and compelling as one day to catch him by the scruff of the neck and throw him out of office. I have used a phrase of Mr Winston Churchill lest somebody should once again unknowingly assert that I lacked decorum: It was Mr Churchill's classic phrase to show how the British Prime Minister is only a servant of the House.

Heavy Spending

I may have sounded fantastic to some people when I declared that the Prime Minister of this, the poorest country in the world, costs Rs 25,000 a day. But it is extraordinary that the government has so far not come out with figures spent on the Prime Minister to refute my charge. If it thinks that my allegation is monstrous, why can't it come out with facts and figures to demolish my point? I would have welcomed that as more dignified and honest on the part of the government than to keep quiet over it. In that enormous jungle that is the Indian Government's Budget—consisting of more than 4000 pages almost 20 lines on each page—it is almost impossible to fish out all the items, but I would give here two sample items: The 1960-61 Demands for Grants No. 135 under the head 'Delhi Capital Outlay' records an item: "Replacing worn-out carpets in the Prime Minister's House", expenditure to the end of 1956-57 is Rs 1,05,710. Probable outlay for 1957-58 was Rs 50,000. Total expenses already made amounted to Rs 1,55,710. The demand for 1958-59 is Rs 50,000. Another item, pertaining to replacement of two air-conditioning units in the Prime Minister's House—mind you, replacement—is Rs 20,000 for 1957-58. The Prime Minister's kitchen is already, in a formal and legal way, part of the President's Estate. I would not be surprised if the Demands for Grant for Rashtrapati Bhavan conceal quite a chunk of what has actually been spent on the Prime Minister's household. I have only given some samples here. I can go on elaborating on this subject of waste and luxury at the top, as I have done elsewhere. If I had the strength of the Communist Party and the Jan Sangh, I would with my will and determination take out a procession of the people of Delhi to rouse public anger against such impermissible wastage. I must regretfully say that the influence of Mahatma Gandhi has made me non-violent, but reading these various items in the Budget makes my blood boil, although only for a few minutes in the traditional way.

Some people have tried to twist the purpose of this pinpointing on the Prime Minister's expenses as a move on my part to deny him, particularly in his old age, the comforts needed for him to carry out his duties as Prime Minister. Far be it for me to deny him any of the normal comforts in life. In fact, I have been raising this question of the Prime Minister's expenditure as part of our campaign to achieve good planning, right taxation, and just pricing. With such luxury expenditure, it would be impossible for India to achieve these.

On a rough estimate, I believe that Rs 2000 crores are being spent annually as super luxury expenditure by the upper classes of India, numbering around 50 lakhs. This sum of money could be easily transferred to planning or to reduction of indirect taxation on essential articles or the abolition of land revenue on uneconomic holdings, as also for the achievement of a price policy for essential articles that would fix sale price at no more than one-and-a-half times the cost price. When I try to take away Rs 2000 crores from India's upper classes, I might mention that Rs 3000 crores will still be left with them to spend as they like.

Dynamic Parties

The present Indian situation has made even a person like me somewhat of a coward and I am not therefore suggesting any revolutionary upheaval in the living standards of the upper classes. I only want them to become a little decent and in keeping with the people, but they would still retain their comfort and more than their comfort.

I have mentioned the Communist Party and the Jan Sangh together, and for that I have a reason. I consider these two somewhat dynamic parties, while the Congress, Swatantra and Praja Socialist Parties I consider static. Dynamisim is not necessarily good in all its forms. I believe that the Communist Party and the Jan Sangh are definitely misguided in many directions. But they are also somewhat dynamic, and their membership is really desirous of radical and revolutionary changes, again not necessarily nor always in the right direction. The Communists, for instance, I would consider somewhat dynamic in relation to private property. The Jan Sangh I would similarly consider dynamic in relation to the issue of language.

If only the right-minded men among Communists and from the Jan Sangh and people like me could get together, we could perhaps cure the Communists of their mistaken beliefs on issues of caste and language and internationalism and particulaly with regard to the relative sphere of privacy as against the sphere of collectivity. Without a doubt, encroachments by the state or by political parties on the privacy of the individual have become a source of concern to many sensible persons. This problem must be solved, and not by clashes alone.

Similarly, the Jan Sangh could perhaps be cured of its mistaken beliefs and practices in relation to property and the Hindu-Muslim question.

I may here add that there are two other sections which are positively harmful in their political combinations whom I still cherish for their past. They are the pre-1946 Congressmen, who have not been able to or have not wished to reach Delhi or Lucknow or Calcutta, and the Praja Socialists. I feel nearest to them in a personal way, although the Praja Socialists, for instance, in their political combinations, I detest more than any other group.

Why cannot all these various groups come together, for purposes of achieving politics of the people in place of the present politics of the summit? I must make it clear that a united front would be positively evil, for it becomes an inevitable source of dishonesty and mutual sniping among apparent friends. What I have in mind is a single party, and if necessary during the transition period, such combinations as the Price-Fix conference or the End-Caste conference or the Banish-English conference, which are non-party rather than all-party. I would also stress the importance of an intellectual reawakening among the people, starting with arousing the curiosity of the people. But I would reserve that for some other occasion, although I believe that to be the most important single point in any political activity.

(September 15, 1962)

Socialism in Indian Context

JAGJIVAN RAM

Labels are generally helpful in broadly indicating the objects or concepts one has in mind. But sometimes they can be very misleading because they gloss over the differences in shades of meaning which may be of profound importance in terms of the world-view and life-outlook of a people.

For instance, when we envisage a socialistic pattern for the old yet young republic of ours, there can be ambiguities hidden in the use of the broad label of socialism. And it may be dangerous for us to let these ambiguities lurk in the background without being brought out into the open, discussed and eliminated.

The recent history of socialism has tended to make it a doctrine of pure economism. Economics deals with the satisfaction of the material wants of man through the intervening mechanism of a market economy which would divert the scarce means of production in those directions where they will fetch the most returns in terms of money.

But there is no particular reason why anyone should accept the economic criterion as the ultimate criterion for the ordering of the life of the individual and the life of society. For instance, a runaway expansion of economic activity in terms of wants artificially generated by the manipulation of mass communication media may reveal nothing basically unsound if looked at from the perspective of pure economism. But if one views the whole issue from the point of view of man, who has other needs besides the material though these latter are basic, one may justly come to the conclusion that progress does not necessarily lie in endlessly and artificially multiplying wants. Economics would now become the problem of meeting the minimal requirements. Once these are guaranteed man would be able to grow towards a fuller life, the demands of which are not always demands for material things.

Cruel Mockery

If it is legitimate thus to deflate the concept of man as a purely economic being governed by material needs, we should not go to the other extreme of demanding that men should concentrate on their spiritual existence and ignore the physical. Actually, the distinction is often unreal. Man has to live first before his spirit can yield its finer fruits, and in the context of any community where the economy does not provide the basic and minimal requirements of the large mass of its population, it can be cruel mockery to talk about the life of the spirit and ignore the demands of a decent existence.

What I want to make clear is that socialism can have many roots and in our tradition at least it has more humanistic roots rather than economic. Our socialism can accommodate many great traditions indigneous to the soil: the religious movements which rebelled against the inhuman stratification of society into groups which had the monopoly of light and those which were condemned to live in the dark; the enlightened humanism of Vivekananda who affirmed that the service of the poor and the downtrodden was the best way of serving God and the profound insight of Gandhiji who said that to a hungry man God can appear only in the form of bread.

Since our socialism is not rooted in any purely economic dogma, it envisages no victory of one class over another, whereas this is a feature which seems to have become intrinsic to the concept of socialism as it has evolved in recent decades in the West. So, all our programmes can be drawn up in the light of two basic aims.

The first is the reduction of tension arising out of social and economic inequalities and discriminations and the establishment of social peace. The second is the growth towards social harmony. The latter of course is the more positive and comprehensive concept, implying as it does understanding, cooperation and the sense of partnership among all groups.

But in the historic context in which we find ourselves, we cannot afford to underrate the first objective in spite of the fact that it is somewhat negative. The reason is that in a country with a relatively low gross national product, competition between groups for monopolistic possession of the low marginal increase in production is likely to be keener and more frequent. Therefore, safeguards have to be introduced, to ensure that all groups benefit equally from the general economic progress of the country, the rate of which is slow now, but certainly can be accelerated.

That the imperatives of production and of social justice can converge is easily demonstrated by a study of the problems of the small farmer. About 62 per cent of the holdings in the country are less than five acres and they account for about 19 per cent of the cultivated area. It should be very clear that modern agriculture has to spread to these holdings also if the increase in production is to be maximised. But scientific agriculture needs substantial investment. The bigger farmer can get financial assistance from institutional sources. The small farmer, however, is under serious handicaps here. If he is not given any special help he will be left completely behind, the gap between the small and rich farmer will widen and both production as well as social justice will suffer. This is why it is desirable to introduce an integrated scheme to help the small farmers by establishing development agencies. These agencies will provide grants to central cooperative banks, agricultural credit societies and cooperative land development banks to cover their loaning risks in financing small farmers, arrange custom service in agricultural machinery and render assistance for developing animal husbandry and poultry to add to the income of the small farmers. About 50,000 small farmers in each district are likely to be covered during the Fourth Plan.

Banking System

Since our socialist theory is not doctrinaire, the practical programmes also need not be abruptly radical. But we must ensure that they deliver the goods. The reasonableness of our approach is demonstrated by our efforts in adapting the banking system to the needs of production as well as social justice. The banking system inherited by independent India was moulded by the British catered primarily to the industrialists and was more particular about what the money was lent against rather than what it was lent for. We tried to eliminate its traditional bias through social control and it is only when it was found that this measure was not enough that we thought of nationalisation.

This gradualness, I am sure, will temper the other programmes to be evolved in the near future. But the absolute minimum required from them will be that they actually deliver the goods. As the Prime Minister said, "We cannot continue to ignore the impatience and frustration with which the underprivileged look at our efforts to help them stand on their feet."

(Annual 1969)

Marxism and Aggression

S.A. DANGE

Mainstream has put to me the question: How is it that a socialist country can commit aggression? The question is quite natural and legitimate. It arises from the fact of history itself.

Way back in 1959 when we were confronted with the beginnings of the India-China border clashes, the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of India at its Calcutta meeting held the opinion that a socialist country, like China, cannot commit aggression, and a free democratic India does not want to launch a war.

Now, three years after that, the National Council of our Party states that China has committed aggression. Does this not show that the theory of Marxism-Leninism has gone wrong?

Some people, in fact, take special pleasure in saying that in the present clash between India and China, Marxism-Leninism has become a casualty.

Some people might ask whether in such strenuous times, it is necessary to raise questions of abstract theory.

I think it is necessary. Problems of war stimulate problems of theory in all fields and become its testing ground.

Testing Ground

With Communists, as everyone knows, everything has to proceed on the basis of theory and its application. Even our opposites, the bourgeoisie, has also its theory of development. Without theory, practice becomes blind. But sometimes even with correct theory, practice goes wrong.

A socialist system does not require aggression for its growth and for solving its problems of social reconstruction. Why? Because the abolition of capitalism and the transfer of the means of production like factories to social ownership and land to cooperative ownership enable it to do away with those problems, which are part of the capitalist system—problems of markets, overproduction, unemployment, rising prices, etc., which are inherent in the capitalist system. These problems force capitalism to undertake conquests of colonies, markets, etc., that is, to resort to aggression. A socialist system does not need such solutions and hence aggression is not in its nature. That is the theory.

-But in practice, aggression has taken place. Why? If the theory is right, why has practice gone wrong? If practice is at fault, why is it so?

This is a question which really requires a longer discussion. But a few things can be said.

The Chinese theoreticians seem to hold that it is the duty of a socialist state to claim every inch of land which any of its preceding rulers may have held or laid claim to, as part of their domain! It does not matter whether the predecessor was a slave-owning or feudal emperor or a warlord. They seem to hold that it is the inherent duty of a socialist state to inherit or complete the geographical national form of the state which history enabled it to possess. Hence the Chinese insistence on the old maps of all its old emperors. Excessive obsession with past national glory and history and a fanatic ambition to restore what it considers its historical geographical national-state form, irrespective of its feudal-imperialist origins and trappings, have led the Chinese leadership to ignore the other aspects of socialist theory of the present epoch—such as peaceful coexistence of states with different social systems, the anti-imperialist role of newly-liberated countries, the problems of preserving peace and preventing war.

A Few Days More

FAIZ AHMAD FAIZ

Only a few days, dear one, a few days more.
Under oppression's shadows condemned to breathe,
Still for a time we must bear them, and tears, and endure
What our forefathers, not our own faults, bequeath:
Fettered limbs, each impulse held on a chain,
Minds in bondage, our words all watched and set down
Courage still nerves us, or how should we still exist,
Now with existence only a beggar's gown,
Tattered, and patched every hour with new rags of pain?

Yes, but to tyranny not many hours are left now;
Patience a little, few hours of lamenting remain.
In this parched air of an age that desert sends choke
We must stay now—not for ever and ever stay!
Under this load beyond words of a foreign yoke
We must submit for a while—not for ever submit!
Dust of affliction that clings to your beauty today,
Crosses unnumbered that mar our few mornings of youth,
Torment of silver nights, a pain with no cure,
Heartache unanswered, the body's long cry of despair—
Only a few days, dear one, a few days more.

(Translated from the original Urdu by Victor Kiernan. Published in Mainstream, *December 25, 1971.)*

Knowing that they are guilty of falling into the clutches of chauvinism (not patriotism), they want to satisfy their socialist conscience and that of others by creating a terrific din over the "imperialist", "illegal", origin of the McMahon Line; then another din, alleging that India is "pro-imperialist", "expansionist" and hence "aggressive" against peaceful China. The "aggressor" must be fought, hence the march over the Himalayas and threatening the plains of NEFA and Assam. The disputed border lines are left far behind.

The theory of Marxism-Leninism, in the initial stages after the Chinese revolution, in which our whole country rejoiced, brought them to the positions of "*Panch-sheel*", which constitute the essence of what state relations should be between states with different social systems, particularly between a socialist state and a newly independent bourgeois-democratic state.

Theory and Chauvinism

But practice went severely wrong and now threatens even world peace, by the theory being overcome by sentiments and emotions of chauvinism, something of Bonapartism, which is incompatible with socialism. That happens when a proletariat is not strong enough in the social forces of a country that is just stepping out of feudalism and bureaucratic capital. Even in bourgeois theory and practice, bureaucratic capital never shows the wider visions of anti-imperialist thinking of national industrial capital. Hence the representatives of the Chinese bourgeoisie and the Indian bourgeoisie have been many times poles apart in their attitudes in the anti-imperialist period. This is a line of argument worth looking into when time and circumstances permit.

I have raised this subject because both India and China have developed theory over the ages and different periods of history. Man, anywhere, any time, cannot live without theory, that is, philosophy. That is why Nehru is described as a philosopher-politician while some are only politicians.

Hence the Marxist-Leninists of Socialism, however much abused today, have to think in terms of philosophy. And war and war-tensions make men think more of philosopy, if not while it is on, surely after it is over. Asoka found his great humanism after the carnage of the Kalinga War and corrected himself even on his Emperor's throne. Attila and Asoka looked at war differently. so does our socialism of the new epoch, when preserving peace and preventing world war, become the paramount duty. But Socialism of the Chinese leadership does not thing that way. Hence, I think, their wrong practice, so harmful to the working class of the whole world.

(November 24, 1962)

THIRTY YEARS OF *Mainstream*

Main Parameters of Technology

P.V. NARASIMHA RAO

We stand today at the crossroads of human destiny where so much is being achieved on the material and intellectual plane.

Knowledge and information are growing at an exponential pace. There seems to be nothing which is beyond man's will to innovate. Great rivers have been harnessed, the galaxies have been exposed in the mirrors of telescopes, the frontiers of space have crumbled, knowledge itself is being packed in miniscule electronic chips. Specialisation and pursuit of excellence have become the order of the day. One is overwhelmed by the power of knowledge that surrounds us.

However, in our endeavour to climb the ladder of scientific truth, it is the human perspective which is sometimes lost. Science and technology are not an end in themselves, but tools through which life in all its aspects has to be enriched. This is where the scientist or the technologist is confronted with a phenomenon which transcends pure research of the laboratory or the frenzied activity of a factory. Science cannot exist by itself. The telescope or the microscope are merely extensions of our senses. They help us to observe physical or biochemical phenomena more minutely and lead to greater understanding—more precisely, to that part of understanding which emanates from observation. This understanding does not amount to total knowledge of the phenomena, but constitutes an important part thereof. Now the power of this partial knowledge can be both destructive or creative, while the scientific method helps in achieving both efficiently and effectively. Between the two, however, the choice is entirely ours; science is quite neutral there.

Quite a few thinking individuals are asking the question: If the choice between creation and destruction is entirely ours, what shall it be? What should it be? It does sound rather self-evident apparently. But is this question unrealistic? Has it been answered? We only know that every living being tends to cling to life. But that does not necessarily amount to a value judgement on life itself as something worth clinging to. If a large number of persons want to smoke or drink, it does not follow that smoking and drinking are good. Desire does not *ipso facto* imply desirability of what is desired. Making life worthwhile is, in essence, the role of all human endeavour, including technology. At least, it ought to be so.

When we say that technology should be oriented to our needs, we should also ask ourselves what our needs should be oriented to. The fact of the matter is that both are bound to change with mutual interaction. But what would be desirable is that the change comes as a co-ordinated package whose contents are clearly spelt out. These contents could be just what we normally understand as need—physical, social, economic, psychological and spiritual. But the first important question that arises is—whose need?

Second, a very critical question about each of these needs—whether there is a need for that need. This is a very basic aspect and cannot be brushed aside.

Third, to what extent do we think that a given need deserves priority, compared to other competing needs?

Fourth, what is the technology which we can afford, in the sense that it enables the corresponding need of the greatest possible number to be fulfilled within the means available?

I am reasonably certain that unless a nation finds the answers to these questions, its technology policy cannot be accurately spelt out. The framework gets blurred all the time and we are always chasing phantasies.

I am trying to get down to basics—what may be called layman's basics, since I cannot speak with authority on highbrow aspects of technology and also happen to hold the oft-repeated yet not always realised view that technology ought to be man's salve and his master. The first question I have raised about need is, whose needs? It contains within itself a wide range of considerations impinging on ecology, nature's justice and the eternal race between need and greed. This is in the realm of man vis-a-vis all that is outside man. Whatever man has thought about his own absolute primacy through time, it appears clear that he can exist only if he is willing to co-exist with many others besides himself, animate and inanimate. Any effort to over-rate his own primacy to the extent of destroying everything else in nature has now been established as being suicidal to man himself. Inevitably, therefore, for man's survival, or co-survival, as described above, the parameters of technology are thus determined to a certain extent. In other words, technology shall be essentially creative, not destructive, except to the extent destruction itself is needed for over-all survival.

This brings us to the next question, namely, the need for a given need. It is not open to any one species, human or non-human, to imagine a need arbitrarily and proceed to fulfil it, unmindful of the needs of others. Need, therefore, becomes a matter of rational determination and not of any flight of fancy. Technology, therefore, at once comes within the ambit of rationality. There can be no such thing as technology for technology's sake.

This is taken from the author's convocation address before the IIT, Delhi (December 29, 1986) as the Union Minister for Human Resource Development.

The question of prioritisation among needs *inter se* is eternal. Even in the context of co-survival, priority becomes crucial within what should survive. Obviously, this is not a choice between survival and extinction, but between survival and survival. From this standpoint, it is much more complex. In a broad sense, it could be observed that priority should be sequential as well as consequential. The earlier should lead to the latter rather than each standing independent of the other. This alone could ensure that the future is constantly built on the achievements of the present and there is no wastage in the process. This is particularly important where resources are limited.

The four main parameters of technology, therefore, could be summed up as follows:

(a) Technology should be need-based, the needs being those of the overall creation, human and non-human, with no exclusive and excessive primacy being attached to any one entity;

(b) Technology should eschew the tendency to serve the so-called needs that are arbitrarily or artifically created or attributed. For instance, in a civilised society there ought to be no need of war for any purpose. Therefore, technology to further the aims and process of war, of any kind, nuclear or non-nuclear, should be suppressed. Scientists should be able to analyse the so-called dual purpose or multipurpose technology and sift the beneficial from the fatal. Wherever there is doubt, the normal rule should be to reject that technology and do without it;

(c) Technology should clearly lay down its target priorities based on the common good. Taking humanity as a whole, the basic needs namely, food, clothing, shelter, health, education, culture could perhaps be acceptable on all hands. In my view, culture is undoubtedly a basic need; in fact, it distinguishes man from other species. Even this statement may not be hundred per cent correct, since each species in creation is known to have its own way of life, in other words, its own culture; and

(d) Technology should be equity-based. Any technology which heightens disparities, tensions and antagonisms, between man and man and between human and non-human entities in creation, should be rejected as inimical to the survival of creation and therefore counter-productive and self-defeating. The outcome of any technology should be harmony and humanism. If man is the master of technology, he should effectively orient it on these lines.

I do not presume to claim my finality or infallibility to these parameters, but I do submit that they are useful and valid, at least illustratively. While the global aspects of war and peace are not entirely within our competence, the domestic parameters could certainly be considered on merit. What applies to technology applies equally to technical education. It is here that the higher institutions of technology as the trail-blazers in technical education, need to look within and assess their utility, in addition to excellence; in the ultimate analysis, I do not find any contradiction between the two.

Now that we have a clear-cut policy approved by the nation, we have to plan the educational process, particularly on the technical side, in such a way that the needs of society are assessed, systems and linkages are provided and the calibre of technical education is oriented to the specifications I have attempted to describe. All these aspects need to be kept in view while the National Policy on Education is translated in specific programmes of action.

◆

COMING from the general to the specific there are some areas of concern especially in the field of higher learning and technical education which must be spelt more specifically:

The ever accelerating pace of change of technologies poses a challenge to the system of technical education.

A large number of technological developments are being attempted all over the world. Some of these turn out to have major potential for change and development (for example, computers). Some more time could be needed to express the merging potential through specific products or processes or improving productivity by adoption of new technology. Once the decision to use a particular technology is made, based on the overall considerations indicated above, the educational planner would then work out the skill development task and would organise an educational system for generating this skill. This would involve preparing teachers, developing a curricular framework, organising instruction, developing learning resource material, organising examination and certification systems, and finally establishing linkages with the user system.

All this takes time. Finally the duration of the education programme determines the gap between admitting students to a particular educational programme and the outturn of requisite manpower. The total time taken in this process can easily be 5-10 years depending on specific situations. In this period, however, technology does not remain static. It has either moved on to another level or evolved into something altogether different. The education system, therefore, ends up chasing some past technology, which often appears to be obsolescent in the glamour of what is termed latest at a given time. This is perhaps the most serious technological problem especially faced by developing countries. To date, I am not sure that we are ready with a final solution. Indeed I am not quite clear about the exact point where a given technology could be called obsolescent and deserves to be changed lock, stock and barrel; despite all the waste and the effort of readjustment and re-orientation involved in adopting a totally new technology. All I can think of as a layman is that the solution to obsolecence could lie only in the direction of self-reliance in technological innovation and development, not necessarily behind or ahead of developed countries, but essentially different, so as to suit our own situations of need and capacity. With this as the basis, strong and reliable systems for technology and manpower forecasting should be set up and the organisational structure of the educational set up made sufficiently flexible so as to reduce reaction-time, adapt to our imperatives and to develop a reasonable resource between the articulation and fulfilment of skill needs through the educational system. I would like to specially emphasise, at this point, that of all the skill[illegible] the educational sytem seeks to give to young student[illegible]d trainees, the skill of upgradation is extremely imp[illegible] perhaps as important, as the skill of innovation.

With the large intellectual capital available within the IITs, with their scientists, engineers and technologists working at the frontiers of knowledge in their respective disciplines, it is only natural to expect that the task of technology forecasting will be pursued earnestly by the IITs and other premier institutions of technology. What is important however is that this is not a sporadic *ad hoc* activity but is systematically pursued through suitable organisation and vigorous, indigenous and continuous effort. Another extremely important point to remember is that this forecasting is not just an exercise in arithmetical computing. It has to be comprehensive, multidisciplinary not only as between technical disciplines but fully interacting with humanities so that the end result is holistic. We are not aiming at creating an expert simpliciter; we want to create a better expertise. To me as a layman, the difference is crystal clear. The Prime Minister called this activity Human Resource Development. We are trying our best, ever since, to spell out the concept in clear-cut terms, to enable it to survive through an impenetrable wall of highbrow cynicism and finally, to save it from the ever-present and real danger of sloganisation and banalisation.

Effort in technology forecasting and manpower forecasting should not be viewed by the institutions as external to their role or as a marginal role. It is indeed very central to maintaining the institution's pre-eminence and to remaining in the forefront. This would bring about a futuristic orientation and keep institutions dynamic and relevant. Let us hope that IIT Delhi would play its due role in this task.

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SINCE the dawn of civilisation the world has witnessed three major phases of change. The first was brought about by the agricultural revolution and dominated until the eighteenth century. Since then the industrial revolution picked up and dominated the advanced countries. Very recently these countries in particular started experiencing the third major phase, the post-industrial phase which is being shaped by new knowledge generated in electronics, space sciences, ocean sciences, microbiology, ecology and behavioural and social sciences.

The future would have been easy to see if only one of these were to dominate. But when the society is struck by two or more waves of change, great upheavals occur. India today is experiencing the impact of all the three waves, that is, agricultural, industrial as well as the post-industrial revolution. Each makes a different impact on the techno-social and information spheres and generates different and often conflicting demands. It is possible to view this complexity and difficulty of task with dismay; but it is also possible to perceive in all this, enormous opprtunities for change and development, to skip intermediate stages and leapfrog directly to the desired future. Much would depend on the ability of our educational system to understand the nature and mechanisms of change and to generate the ability to manage change through creating a manpower base capable of imaginative and futuristic thinking, system-planning, system development and acting as change agents. These skills are required in addition to skills in specific technologies. The technical education system generally and the IITs in particular as its leading edge, should therefore take on these challenges.

At this point, I would like to indicate the scenario that is emerging today. Rural areas are marked by the dominance of agriculture with small industries and handicrafts producing goods and services for a limited number of consumers. The rural scene is, however, beginning to feel the impact of industrial technology and changing its social pattern. For example, the introduction of tractors, electricity, chemical fertilisers and changed methods of farming have subjected the agricultural system to mass production and mass distribution. This has changed the pattern of land holdings, concentrated economic power in a few hands and rendered a large number into landless labourers. In the manufacturing sector also machines have made locally available skills in handicrafts obsolete, again rendering a large number of people jobless. This has caused migration of rural folk into the urban areas in search of jobs. They need new skills which will fit them into the industrial system of production and distribution. In the urban areas too, the production system is being managed by small, medium and large industrial organisations each using its intermediate and high technologies. At present, the system of technical education is designed primarily for the large organised sectors. There is little which caters to the technological and manpower needs of the unorganised, small and medium manufacturing units. This is why the new National Policy on Education states that "the infrastructure and service sectors as well, as the unorganised rural sector also need a greater induction of improved technologies and a supply of technical and managerial manpower".

The technical education system has the responsibility to look after this need. There is a widespread impression that these are simple tasks, or that simpler or inferior technologies are needed for these other sectors, and are not the concern of premier institutions of technology which work in frontier sophisticated areas. It is important to dispel this notion and remind ourselves of the many instances in which the appropriate technologies for these sectors have to be, if anything made sophisticated if the intention is to make them viable. They are also much more difficult and challenging for the simple reason that the known Meccahs of sophistication have not tackled such problems of small magnitude coupled with great complexity. Therefore, there appears to be no use for us and other developing countries to look up to them for solving our problems.

Modern communication technologies including satellite communication, for instance, have been used for generating literacy and functional skills. We have to pursue this time of action and evaluate the results regularly and meaningfully. Furthermore, the task of serving unorganised and rural sectors involves creating organisations, systems, technologies and skills at various levels, coping with a variety of attitudes and capabilities. Either we ourselves can do this, or we cannot. No one else will take the trouble of bailing us out, since no high profits seems to be involved. This task is both large and complex and there is a role for every level of institutions in this, from the IITs to the ITIs.

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HIGH energy input technologies based on non-renewable resources, mass production and consumption systems are, however, playing havoc with the environment. Forests are being rapidly denuded and raw materials are getting depleted, the store of fossil oils is expected to last just another 50 years. Given the pollution levels, indefinite continuation of industrial civilisation does not seem to be possible and environmental constraints are going to limit our technological options. We seem to be approaching the post-industrial era whose salient factors are:

(i) change in the nature of energy base;

(ii) emergence of new sciences, namely, quantum electronics, information theory, molecular biology, ecology, space sciences, behavioural and social sciences;

(iii) emergence of related industries, namely, electronics and computer industry, space industry, ocean industry and gene industry;

[illegible] demanification and diversification of information systems.

[illegible] view of the depletion of fossil oils in the near [illegible] we have to search for renewable sources of energy, for example, sun, tide and wind. Even energy from coal and nuclear fusion is not going to solve all our problems. R & D effort would have to be focussed on non-conventional energy sources: photovoltaic conversion of solar energy, solar thermal systems for process heat and power generation; low cost high efficiency digesters for biogas generation, development of species for biomass production in wastelands; integrated rural energy systems using solary energy, wind energy and biomass, techniques for generation, storage and utilisation of hydrogen, etc.

I could go on cataloguing these areas. The only layman's point that strikes me as noteworthy is that in these new areas peculiar to our conditions, no one else has already gained any great head start ove us. We can also deliver, if we have the will and penchant for indigenous effort.

We thus have a vast agenda for research, skill development and indigenous effort. It is an agenda for generating scientific and technolgocial tools which will enable our society to cope with the future effectively in its own way.

(Republic Day, 1987)

Towards Common Civil Code

E.M.S. NAMBOODIRIPAD

It is almost a century and a half since the then British rulers thought it proper to concede the demand, made by a group of social reformers in Hindu society, to put an end to the atrocious but long-existing practice of *sati*. The pioneers of social reform who prevailed upon the foreign rulers to bring about that reform in Hindu society were the torch-bearers of social upsurge for modernising Hindu society.

Although confined, in the beginning, to the work of restructuring the ancient society and culture of the Hindu community, taking to it the modern values and social practices of the growing capitalist system, the advance of the movement as it developed turned Indian society upside down. Modernisation of education, culture and social practices raised, before long, the idea of economic regeneration along the lines of industrialisation and, finally, the demand for such administrative and political changes as confer on the Indian people the same institutions of political democracy as obtain in the homeland of the British rulers. The demand of putting an end to *sati* was thus the starting point of a process which culminated, after successive stages, in the raising of the political demand for complete independence.

Over a century elapsed since the first act of reforming Hindu society was finished before the idea of a Common Civil Code embracing the marriage, divorce, inheritance and other civil laws of Indian society came to be incorporated into the Directive Principles chapter of the newly-adopted republican Constitution of free India. A few years later, the idea of a Common Civil Code was partly put into practice by the first elected Parliament enacting what was given the name of the Hindu Code. Although keeping the non-Hindu religious communities out of its purview, the Hindu Code brought about, for the first time in the history of this ancient land, the unification of the various "personal laws" of Hindu castes and communities.

Illustrative of the "multiplicity of personal laws" operating in pre-independence India, this writer recalls a series of legislations brought forward in the first half of this century in the Malabar, Cochin and Travancore parts of the present State of Kerala. Calculated to break up the patriarchal and matriarchal joint families, restrict polygamous marriages, put an end to several forms of archaic customs of marriage and family life, etc., these were called the Nair regulation, the Namboodiri Bill, the Ezhava Bill and so on. The various customs and laws of marriage and family relations were sought to be "reformed" but the "personal law" character of each caste's relations was maintained as a "reformed personal law".

An end was being put to this state of affairs when the first Parliament of free India enacted the Hindu Code. Like the earlier adoption of a Common Civil Code as a "Directive Principle of State Policy", the enactment of the Hindu Code was indicative of the fact that free India was surely though slowly moving towards the bourgeois type of marital and property relations. Love marriages instead of arranged marriages, easy divorce but with the responsibility of the male partner to maintain the divorced wife and children, the smaller (man-wife) family in place of large joint families—these are the directions in which society was moving. The idea of a Common Civil Code and the enactment of the Hindu Code were the two pillars on which rested the new society that was coming up.

But, by the time the Constitution with the Common Civil Code as one of the Directive Principles of State Policy was adopted, the British rulers had left the Indian shores. While leaving, however, they divided the country into a Hindu India, or the Indian Union, and a Muslim India, or Pakistan. The social reforms initiated with the abolition of *sati* came to be confined to Hindu society in the Indian Union, the Muslims and Christians being kept out of it. Why? Was it because the two non-Hindu communities did not throw up a group of social reformers as the Hindus did? Certainly not. For, although lagging behind the Hindus, non-Hindus too were moved by the process of modernisation. Particularly is this true of the Muslims who had their socio-cultural renaissance whose outstanding leader was the founder of the well-known educational institution which developed into the present-day Aligarh Muslim University. The leader of the Muslim community were warned that, if they failed to keep pace with the process of modernisation, they would fall behind the rest of Indian society in economic as well as politicial life. Those who initiated the movement for socio-cultural renaissance among the Muslims associated themselves also with the developing movement for political reforms: although a little behind their non-Muslim brethren, the Muslim intelligentsia and the professionals joined the movement for political emancipation or freedom for the country.

These developments naturally alarmed the British rulers. They thought that, although couched in moderate language, the demand was being made that the British rulers should gradually divest themselves of the administrative and political authority wielded by them, handing it over to the representatives of the people. However, representing as they did a country which had become known throughout the world as having the oldest of elected parliament system, a system in which the executive is responsible to Parliament, they could not deny their subjects in India the right to have the same system established here. They therefore resorted to the method adopted by the foreign rulers of every country in world history since the days of ancient Rome—"divide and rule".

Making clever use of the traditional antipathy between Hindus and Muslims, they whipped up the feelings of pride in the "glorious empires of old" lorded over by the Hindu and Muslim emperors respectively. Manipulating the "study" of the history and culture of ancient and mediaeval India, they helped the growth of the idea that the Maurya and other emperors of ancient India were Hindus, while the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal Empire showed Islamic rule in all its glory. It was on the basis of this Hindu and Islamic revivalism that the British rulers hatched their plans of dividing on communal lines the popular movements for political freedom and socio-cultural renaissance.

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THE growth of Hindu and Islamic revivalism was of course not an uninterrupted process. It had to contend with the radical forces at the ideological and political levels. Rationalism, atheism, the radical restructuring of social life and culture—these were contending with the Hindu and the Muslim as any other form of revivalism and obscurantism. There was however one big difference in that revivalism and obscurantism were stronger, and radicalism weaker, among the Muslims than among the Hindus. The development of a definite trend of Islamic politics which flowered into the demand for dividing India along the lines of the two major religious communities made even sections of the progressive elements adopt revivalist and obscurantist positions.

The demand that a distinctly Islamic state should be carved out of India gave rise to the preservation and protection of all that is Islamic in social life, culture, personal behaviour, etc. The framers of the first Constitution of free India had to take this into account when writing into the Constitution the principle of a

Common Civil Code. While stating in no unmistakable terms the principle that Indian citizens regardless of their castes, religions, etc. should be governed by the same civil as well as criminal law, they left it to the future—a time when the Muslims, Christians, etc. would voluntarily accept it—the implementation of the principle through appropriate legislation.

The coming into force of the Hindu Code thus constituted the strength as well as the weakness of the process of modernisation. The antiquated customs of Hindu society manifested in polygamy, child marriage, enforced widowhood, etc. which oppress women as a whole, as well as the outmoded systems of property rights and inheritance have been abolished so far as the Hindu segment of the society is concerned. While this may be considered as the logical culmination of the process begun with the abolition of *sati*, the entire process was confined only to the Hindus. The minority religious communities, particularly the Muslims, were out of the purview of the social reforms. The Muslims as a community were made to believe that the social and family relations handed down to them from the epoch of the Prophet are the best in the world, cannot be departed from. Any effort to bring about even the smallest reforms in that system is denounced as an attack on the freedom of conscience—a fundamental right of religious minorities.

This of course is nothing new nor confined to this particular minority community. Every step forward to the modernisation of society, including that of the Hindu majority, was attacked by the conservatives within that community as an attack on their religion and culture. Banning child marriages, prohibiting the practice of untouchability, allowing the Harijans to enter the temples along with the high caste Hindu, permitting widows to have re-marriage—every one of these reforms met with tough resistance organised by the reactionary elements in the Hindu community. President Rajendra Prasad clashed with Prime Minister Nehru even regarding the Hindu Code legislation; this in fact was the last act of resistance from the Hindus. Within the Muslim community too, there was and is naturally a big fight between the conservatives and the radicals.

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IN the struggle between the conservatives and the radicals, the former could strengthen themselves in the last 25 years because, with the increasing isolation of the Congress Party among the people, particularly in view of the fact that the non-Congress Opposition in some regions is led by the Left-wing forces, the leaders of that party are obliged more and more to pander to the backward sentiments of religious obscurantism and caste separatism. Seen for the first time in the Congress alliance with the Muslim League, Christian hierarchy and caste leaders of both the 'forward' and 'backward' castes in Kerala in the anti-Communist front of Kerala in 1960, it has since then now extended itself to several other States and regions. The present ruling coalition in Kerala in fact consists of the Congress as the leader, the once-again-reunited Muslim League and the Christian-Church-dominated Kerala Congress as the two next biggest parties in the coalition. It therefore depends for its survival on surrender by the Congress to every blackmail and threat put forward by the communal and caste leaders.

This has emboldened the Muslim League leaders to demand that (a) the Common Civil Code written into the Constitution as a Directive Principle of State Policy should be abrogated; (b) the provision in the Indian Penal Code that the divorced woman is entitled to receive, from her ex-husband, maintenance allowance till she remarries or dies should be made inapplicable to Muslims. The League MPs from Kerala where that party is an electoral ally of the Congress has moved a non-official bill making these demands on the government.

This however is not all. The President of the Indian Union Muslim League, Sulaiman Sait, went on record with the suggestion that the local Muslim Jamaats be entrusted with the power to dispense with criminal justice in accordance with the Islamic Criminal Law. That, he claims, will be of great benefit to society, reducing crimes! An example of this type of Islamic "justice" was provided in Kerala where a *jamaat* tried an elderly lady with children and grandchildren, found her guilty and 'awarded' a 'punishment' of 101 lashes on the buttocks besides her head being shaved off. It is the power to 'award' such 'punishment' under the Islamic Shariat law that the League President demands should be conferred on the local *jamaats*!

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THE fundamentalists and obscurantists however cannot do as they please. For, public opinion is building up in the Muslim community itself—not the least among the Muslim women who have come out in large numbers in all parts of the country in defence of the Supreme Court verdict and against the opposition of the obscurantists. A large number of public figures in the Muslim community, including clergymen, have come out in denuciation of the vested interests who are misinterpreting the human principles of Islam. There are others who have no hesitation to insist that, even if some elements of the Islamic code of conduct whch do not benefit modern society require modifications in the hallowed traditions of Islam, making such charge is not contrary to the principles of the Prophet's teachings. Even those who come as the determined champions of what they call Shariat do admit that there are large-scale distortions and abuses in present-day practice. All these are bound to help weakening the forces of obscurantism and socio-cultural reaction.

(Annual 1985)

THIRTY YEARS OF *Mainstream*

Decline of Rajiv Government

L.K. ADVANI

The present Rajiv Government has without doubt proved the worst since independence. Its performance on all fronts—domestic, foreign, political and economic—has been as dismal as the hopes it aroused had been high.

We had been critical of Indira Gandhi's Government on various counts but our criticism essentially was that it was pursuing a wrong direction. In the case of Rajiv Gandhi, whether it is economic policy or whether it is political policy on issues like Punjab or Sri Lanka, the burden of our criticism is that it has no policy, no direction.

Much has been made of Deoras' reference to the Rajiv Government. Let me clarify it. Deoras' speech at Nagpur on Vijayadashami Day in 1986—two years ago—contained two points. First, that the Congress Party was riven with factionalism and it was fast disintegrating. Even Congressmen admit that it would never be the same again. And unfortunately there is no other party in the country with a wide enough base to be an alternative to the Congress.

The headlines given to his speech were: "No alternative to the Congress: says Deoras". This seemed to be a value judgment in favour of the Congress.

But to me, a member of an Opposition party which has been trying to educate the people that the present Congress Government has proved a disaster for the country, Deoras' speech came only as an exhortation to exert ourselves to be able to fill the vacuum created by the disintegrating Congress. And after that I have had so many discussions, I met him so many times.

Indira Gandhi played the Hindu card in the J & K elections in 1983. However, Rajiv Gandhi played not a Hindu card but an anti-Sikh card in the Lok Sabha elections in 1984.

In the light of what is being described as Rajiv Gandhi's Hindu appeal or the Hindu card I must say that in his three and a half years in power, Rajiv Gandhi's decision in favour of the Muslim Women's Bill is an unabashed pandering to the communal appeal which has, generally speaking, not only destroyed his credentials as a modern, forward-looking, secular leader but has also angered large sections of Hindu society.

Let me make some observations about the Opposition. Too much attention on summit level meetings of the Opposition parties detracts from party activities at the grassroots. Our advice to our party units has been that decisions in respect of adjustments and alliances would take place, crystallise shortly before the elections are held. As for the BJP, its party units, in the meantime, should concentrate on mobilising public opinion, organising them for mass struggles on people's issues, particularly those related to farmers and Harijans, and leave this business of inter-party dialogue to a few persons at the top.

At the top level it has been our conviction that leaders of the other Opposition parties are less concerned with Opposition credibility than they are with Opposition unity and these unending talks about unity laced intermittently with bitter recriminatory statements against one another have gravely impaired the credibility of the Opposition parties.

In fact in the last couple of months activity in the Opposition camp had given to Rajiv a measure of undeserved credibility. The Opposition, however, should be thankful to him that in this last week of Parliament, he has, first by his rude attitude to Andhra legislators and next by his Defamation Bill, shifted the spotlight of public attention from Opposition wrangles to his own arrogance and incompetence and served the Opposition better than they could themselves.

Opposition parties should demonstrate to the people a capacity to work together despite differences. They could work together on specific issues. They could forge an alliance in case of an election but on the basis of a specific, well-directed programme. There seems less concern about these two matters and much more concern with having a common symbol, with having a common flag and parcelling out posts and offices. This does not enhance the credibility of the Oppossition.

My relations with other Opposition parties and groups would be governed by considerations of reciprocity. We have had a very bitter experience only recently in the by-elections. Shortly after the by-elections, the Jamshedpur meeting of the BJP National Executive in early July emphasised that our relations with other Opposition parties insofar as elections are concerned would be governed by considerations of reciprocity.

Let me conclude by focussing on a case of disinformation claculatedly perpertrated by the Rajiv Gandhi Government as it throws light on its care for truth.

During the Lok Sabha debate on the Defamation Bill 1988, Minister of State, Chidambaram, had stated that the Bill was similar to the one that had been passed by the Rajya Sabha in 1978 (and which had lapsed because of the dissolution of the Lok Sabha). At first I could not make out what Bill he had been referring to, though I was absolutely sure that during the Janata's tenure in office there was no legislation of any kind whatsoever which abridged press freedom, whereas the Bill that was introduced in the Lok Sabha was unabashedly an assault on press freedom.

On going through the records of the Rajya Sabha debate in 1978, I discovered that Chidambaram was a consummate expert in disinformation. The Bill that he was referring to (of 1978) was not a Defamation Bill, it was an IPC Amendment Bill and the original bill had been introduced by Indira Gandhi's Government in 1972. It had been referred to a Joint Select Committee of Parliament in 1973 which had submitted its report in 1976. On the basis of the report of the Joint Select Committee, an IPC Amendment Bill was brought before the Rajya Sabha and passed. I examined the provisions minutely. After all till now there has been no separate law on defamation in the country. Offences pertaining to defamation are covered by four provisions of the Indian Penal Code—Sections 499, 500, 501 and 502.

The Bill passed in 1978 was an IPC Amendment Bill. It was a comprehensive bill. It had around 204 clauses. Of these four related to defamation. And these four clauses incorporated some minor amendments suggested by the Law Commission in its 42nd Report of 1971.

Thus the Law Commission had been given a suggestion by others: the provision relating to punishment for defamation provides that a person found guilty (of defamation) would be sentenced to two years imprisonment. The suggestion was that this punishment be enhanced. The Law Commission rejected the suggestion and said that it found no justification for enhancing the sentence.

However, the Law Commission stated that instead of simple imprisonment the law could be changed to provide for two years imprisonment of legal description so that depending upon the gravity of the case the imprisonment could be simple or rigorous.

Another recommendation of the Law Commission which had been incorporated was about covering proceedings in a law court. Presently if a newspaper gives a fair or accurate report of the proceedings in a court, it is immune from any action for defamation. The Law Commission said that this immunity should be in respect of trials in open court.

Such minor and innocuous amendments of the provisions relating to defamation were incorporated in that 1978 bill which Chidambaramji mentioned in order to justify the outrageous piece of legislation that he had sprung upon Parliament in the last week of the monsoon session.

To me it appears that the abrupt change in mood of the press—starting with admiration and adulation in the first year of Rajiv Gandhi's rule, changing to scepticism and mild criticism in the second year, and thereafter changing very sharply to severe denunciation of his performance and actions, and exposure of a string of scandals over the last one and a half year—has made Rajiv Gandhi extremely angry with the press. It is this anger which reflects itself in the Defamation Bill.

Of course, there are provisions in this Bill which are based upon the recommendations of the Law Commission and some recommendations of the Press Commission. But they seem to be essentially a camouflage to conceal the main intentions of the Bill which come up very sharply in more than a dozen provisions of the Bill, and these have nothing to do with the recommendations of either of these two bodies.

In particular, Chapter III of the Defamation Bill 1988 under the title "Criminal Imputation" is the most obnoxious. After all, in all the exposures that have taken place in the last one and a half year imputations have been made without doubt against the Prime Minister, against the Bachchans, against the Win Chadhas, against the Hindujas, against the Lalit Suris, that they have been violating certain laws of the land. It is this "criminal imputation" which the Bill seeks to punish.

The basic canon of jurisprudence, namely that the accused is innocent until proved guilty, has been stood upon its head by this new law in which the accused would be presumed to be guilty unless he is able to prove his innocence.

The Law Commission had rejected proposals for enhancement of punishment for defamation whereas this new Bill provides for five years imprisonment. Changes have been effected even in the Criminal Procedure Code insofar as cases of defamation are concerned. Provisions for day-to-day summary trials, empowering rejection of pleas for dispensation of personal appearances—all these add up to a definite and determined bid to harass and pressurise the press into conformity and to put a firm brake on investigative journalism.

Chidambaram picked provisions from the notorious PPOMA of the Emergency days and took some provisions from the infamous Bihar Press Bill and added some of his original ideas to these and came forth with a piece of legislation which is totally subversive of press freedom. No wonder the entire press fraternity—from Goenka to Girilal, from Arun to Akbar, from Nikhil to N.Ram—the entire press fraternity was up in arms against it.

The Defamation Bill episode has another fact. It has become a practice with this government to spring upon Parliament, towards the end of a session, unpopular and anti-people measures of this kind. They did it in the case of the Fiftyninth Amendment, they did it in the case of the Direct Taxation Laws Amendment Bill, they did it in the case of the Special Protection Group Bill and they tried to do it in the case of the Defamation Bill. These laws are the outcome of a mentality which is essentially authoritarian and intolerant of any democratic constraints.

So it is not only the content of these laws but even the manner of rushing them through Parliament which has been invariably undemocratic.

In the case of this Defamation Bill, as I have already stated, I regard it more as an expression of Rajiv's anger and displeasure with the press than anything else.

(Annual 1988)

THIRTY YEARS OF *Mainstream*

Karyanand Sharma

A Respected Memory

P.C. JOSHI

When a dearly loved and deeply respected comrade is no longer, the question spontaneously arises in one's mind: What distinguished the departed comrade as to leave this sorrowful void in the heart? This is just what happened to me as I learnt of the sad news of the demise of Comrade Karyanand Sharma.

Sharmaji, as we all his comrades affectionately and adoringly called him, was associated in our memory for his high moral character. For honesty, selflessness and devotion to the cause, he ranked amongst the peerless; and even his political opponents dared not dispute this. The Party recognised these high qualities of his by electing him more than once, from its highest forum, the Party Congress, to the Central Control Commission, something like the Supreme Court to judge the erring, the corrupt, the disruptive and alien elements inside the Party ranks.

His character was an admirable blend of the simplicity of an honest Gandhite and the fire of a good loyal Leninist.

Sharmaji came to the Party from the very bosom of the national movement and after he had already acquired the status of a top national leader of the Congress in Bihar. The State Party leaders in those early days were former student leaders and they posed the question: how shall we digest him? Those very comrades are the head of the Party now and I am confident if they remember their trepidation of those early days they will readily admit that Sharmaji never became a problem to the Party and always proved himself an asset, in weathers, fair or foul.

Sharmaji was a national veteran of the early twenties. He was a school teacher when the Mahatma gave the call for his first non-cooperation movement. Our Sharmaji was among the very first Biharis to respond to his call. He gave up his job and joined the ranks of the anti-British fighters under the tri-colour. He never looked back. From that day over four decades ago his only job became to serve the people and fight for national liberation.

During the first civil disobedience movement the British rulers did not ban the Congress as an organisation but its volunteers wing, the Seva Dal, which recruited, trained and organised the *satyagrahis*. It was these volunteers who went from village to village in *jathas* for political campaign, who organised and activised the people through meetings and demonstrations and themselves filled the jails to overflowing.

Congress Volunteer

Readers will rememember that even leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru donned the Congress volunteer's uniform those days. To become a Congress volunteer was the much sought after way for the honour to function as a national activist. More, to get enrolled as a Congress volunteer and become vigorously active was the surest way to come into police notice and get arrested soon after. And the jail-*yatra* was the highest honour one could cover in those exhilarating days.

Sharmaji was among the top four responsible Congressmen who was entrusted with the task of organising the *satyagrahi* volunteers. He did job so well that he not only became known and respected among Bihar's patriotic circles but was classed by them among the chief lieutenants of Rajendra Babu, like Sri Krishna Sinha, Anugraha Narayan Sinha and Bibhuti Misra whose comrade-in-arms he was in those days.

Along with the rest he had to serve his terms in jail. Once I asked him: "How many times have you been in jail?" His answer with a smile was: "Can't remember and it is not worth bothering about."

After *swaraj* could not be won within one year as the Mahatma had forecast, Sharmaji concentrated his political and mass work in is home district, Monghyr, which was also Sri Krishna Sinha's home and the two were close collaborators. In the civil disobedience movement of the thirties, Monghyr did very well. Sharmaji was again arrested.

Earnest Rethinking

With the experience of the Mahatma-led movement failing a second time, earnest rethinking began in the national ranks and at all levels.

Jawaharlal Nehru's Leftward moving '*Whither India*' articles appeared, the Communists joined the Congress inside which the Congress Socialist group emerged, and the two began functioning together to give the Congress a consistent anti-imperialist and really mass-wards orientation. Trade union unity was achieved, the All-India Students' Federation started its meteoric rise and serious efforts began to organise the peasants in every province under the banner of the All-India Kisan Sabha.

A sincere and experienced patriot and so close to the peasantry as Sharmaji was, could not but become an ardent and active advocate of this new energising trend in the national movement.

Alongwith Swami Sahajanand, Yadunandan Sharma and other anti-feudal Congress leaders, Sharmaji threw himself heart and soul into the task of organising the Kisan Sabha in the districts of Bihar and making his own a kisan stronghold.

Bihar of those days was honey-combed with big feudals. A good and influential section of the landlords were inside the Congress and the mass of peasants were also under its influence. In fact the peasantry took the Kisan Sabha as the pro-peasant wing of the Congress and they were not wrong!

Patna, Gaya and Monghyr, contained the heart-land of old Magadh, and constituted one cultural-economic pattern. These Kisan leaders came from these very districts which abounded in feudal exploitation and oppression. The struggle against these became the basis of the famous peasant Bakasht struggle which was fought long and heroically and ended only when a settlement in favour of the peasantry was reached.

Sharmaji was the cool, calm and tireless organiser of the Bakasht struggle and the key front was at Barhaiyatal. I remeber my visit to Patna those days as JP's guest (we were real good comrades-in-arms in those days) and the pride with which he recounted the stories of heroism in the anti-feudal struggle. There was competition among the Left Congress Kisanites, the Congress Socialists and the Communists to be sent to Barhaiyatal as *satyagrahis*. The point of honour was to go to jail as a *satyagrahi* and come back wounded at the hands of the zamindar goondas or police lathis, to be admitted to the hospital.

I got to know Sharmaji well when I went to Gaya in 1938 to attend the All-India Kisan Sabha. It was the peak year of anti-feudal peasant struggles and not only in Bihar though the real stormcentre was here. The landlords, operating both from within the Congress and outside and with their control of the Patna press and influence over the Calcutta dailies which also came to Bihar, were itching for and planning a bloodbath. The Congress Ministry, again under feudal pressure, was indulging in fiddle-play. The kisan leaders were angry beyond words and eager to assume the Parashuram posture.

Tactics of Unity

The danger of desparate provocation was real. The wise and sober Acharya Narendra Dev had come to preside over the session, JP and myself were present as fraternal delegates or observers, the kisan leaders assembled were Left Congressmen, Congress Socialists and Communists. We collectively discussed the Bakasht experience and worked out a tactical line that led not only the Bakasht struggle out of the impasse but the victory of peasant struggle in the other provinces as well. The Bakasht struggle was the epic example which enabled the Indian kisan movement to work out its tactics of united kisan struggle based on broad popular support achieving a fair and just settlement within the framework of the anti-feudal and anti-imperialist front.

After this Bakasht struggle, Sharmaji became a kisan leader par excellence. Whenever the zamindars located any trouble or the peasants felt strong enough to fight, Sharmaji was inevitably summoned to advise and guide the *morcha*.

When the Second World War broke out and the anti-imperialist tide swept over the land, Sharmaji found himself a detenu in Hazaribagh jail with Communists and Lefts of all trends. Communist-Socialist differences had begun and there was nothing else in jail to do except discuss and fight to defend ones own viewpoint. Sharmaji was a silent but eager listener to the long and quite often very acrimonious debate. This debate, with his own whole life's experience, impelled him to apply for the membership of our Party. We felt proud to welcome him in our ranks.

1942 Crossfire

On coming out of jail, Sharmaji had to work literally under crossfire during the 1942 days, the wanton atrocities of the British police military from one side, and the maddening fury of his erstwhile comrades of the Congress, the Congress Socialists and the Forward Blockists. Sharmaji later told me several times that those were the saddest days of his life. I used to cheer him up with: why, it was a great national experience, of imperialist bestiality on the one hand and mad patriotic indignation on the other, the Congressmen suffered from the same political disease in 1942 that we Communists did in 1948-50 under the Ranadive leadership! He used to smile and quietly add: "Comrade Joshi, you can't imagine what it was like to live through." I got a taste of it myself and in Sharmaji's Monghyr itself.

During the 1946 general elections, the Party put up Sharmaji against the former and future Chief Minister, Sri Krishna Sinha. They both came from the same constituency and were old colleagues. We were out to assert our patriotic bonafides and they were all set to damn and sweep us out as '1942 *ghaddars*'. The debate was fiery and furious. The mass mobilisation on both sides went stronger and stronger. I went to address the election eve rally at Lakhisarai, the hub of the area. It was a mammoth crowd, not only of our followers, but of neutral elements and Congressmen as well. Sharmaji was presiding and I was speaking. I minced no words in defence of the Party policy and I have never been and can never be offensive towards the National Congress, the mother of us all. There was pindrop silence, but before I could conclude, the meeting was, according to a predetermined plan, attacked from all sides simultaneously, with lathis, spears and like either instruments. A gang came advancing towards the rostrum.

In Charge

Sharmaji asked me to hurry up and leave with some volunteers to guide. I refused to go leaving him behind. That is the only occasion I ever saw Sharmaji angry and he burst out: "Comrade Joshi, you have taught us discipline all our times and now you won't obersve discipline! Who is in charge here, you or I?" He just passed me on to a few tough volunteers whose lathis led me to safety, darkness and the shelter of the paddy-fields behind, from where we crawled to a poor peasant's hut nearby.

I beseeched the volunteer comrades to rush back and look after Sharmaji. They needed no prompting.

I waited anxiously and after some hours the shocking news came that Sharmaji had been severely wounded, in the head, the arms and the hands badly broken, and was lying in hospital.

A few days later the voting took place, the same *goondagiri* was indulged in, our booths were attacked, our supporters terrorised and so on. Sharmaji lost and Sri Babu won, but it did not last long.

During the 1957 general elections, the same Sharmaji won from the same constituency and became the leader of the Opposition to the Ministry headed by the same Sri Babu. And when Sharmaji used to speak in the Bihar Assembly, whether exposing the evils of the regime or making constructive proposals in people's interest, Sri Babu was present on the Treasury Benches to listen to Sharmaji's truthful and wise words.

Struggle-Demagogy

The poisonous seed of Leftism had become deeply planted inside our Party, its thought and organisation both. The stock-in trade was struggle-demagogy. Sharmaji had devoted his whole life to organising peasant struggles. He knew from bitter personal experience how Left dogmatism isolates and disrupts the peasantry and is in practice the line of negating and liquidating struggles. Ever since 1947 I have shut all my time and thought fighting Leftism inside the Party. We had thus plenty in common, and were one in spirit. I respected him for his mass experience and he respected me for what he called my "learning".

I always insisted that he stayed behind after every meeting of the all-India Party leadership and he readily used to agree. I used to make him talk and talk about the situation on the kisan front and new developments in rural life, and he used to make me talk on international and national developments and read up all that I gave him. We were very much unlike each other but became very closely attached to each other in comradely bonds.

Despite changes and improvements in the Party line the kisan front remained bogged. My favourite theme became: let us re-examine our understanding of the agrarian problem by restudying Leninist teaching and applying them to Indian conditions, not through the prison of our pre-conceived notions not only on the basis of data from official books but by conducting independent field research at the village level and discover for ourselves how the rural set-up is changing. The leading kisan comrades used to easily agree and accept topics for field research. As the Editor of the Party organ I used to pester them with reminders but drew blank when I used to meet them at meetings of leading Party bodies and remind them. I only got a smile in return. I was old and senior enough to take liberties with most comrades and scream that the poison of sectarianism had sucked their brains dry and left them capable of nothing more than routine work.

First Rate Piece

In sheer desperation I turned to Sharmaji and beseeched him to set an example. He argued that he was no intellectual, not learned in Marxism-Leninism, how could he meet my demand and successfully do research? The reader can easily guess my answer. Within a few months Sharmaji produced a study on the conditions of landless labourers of Bihar, based on his personal investigations with the help of local comrades concerned. I published it in the Party's theoretical monthly. It was a first-rate piece of scientific work and a very moving documentary.

Sharmaji was becoming older, not only ageing but losing in health. Good friends that we were I asked him what he ate, etc. He came from poor peasant stock and the Party wage was not enough to keep the family going. He was literally starved of nutrition and with the hard fieldwork he was doing. I requested some comrades working in the medical profession to give me some nourishing stuff for the old man. I passed these on to him, and told him in all solemnity that I had consulted the experts and these were the 'medicines' which he must take without fail.

Next time when he came he looked better and attributed it all to the 'medicines' he had taken away last time. I then revealed the secret to him that they were no medicines at all but just vitamins and other food values.

We discussed his case and decided to send him to Poland for rest and cure. It did him a lot of good. But it did not last long. His was a life of suffering and starvation. He was again sent to the USSR this time. News came that he was improving but then came the fatal heart-stroke and we Communists lost one of our worthy comrades and Bihaar one of its most upright and loyal popular leaders.

When the coffin was received at the Palam airport it was not only we Communists who were present but also his Socialist and Congress comrades. Congressmen, Socialists and Communists unite in homage to the dead. Why can't we unite in the service of the living for whose cause the dear departed died? ■

(December 4, 1965)

The Song of the Juniors

BISHNU DEY

Our early years had been scalding pain,
Our times hung heavy all the while,
What calamities, what disasters to pass through!
On the wide wilderness of hugetime
I see your hand beckoning under your banyon shade
With the boon of your thousand roots—
And our dead boyhood and youth come to life.

Not to the enchantress, it was of man's own making,
Of men of the earth, in man's homage to man!
In pin-pointed eyes and ever-alert work,
That ever-quick heart, Lenin's mind and life
Gave wings to youth, high up in the skies.

And so we all hear that music of the stars
And see Volga imaged in Ganga!
Yes, we admit our nights and days are our own,
No magic gift, but sons of the same great mother,
  we bring
With folded hands, into your hands our late-born youth.

Elder! You built up the archetype,
So, on the shoals of our Ganga,
On the peak of Meghna's current we build up history
Over the floods of the dream, of the new life on our
  burnt-up wilderness,
However eaten-up and impoverished be the present,
One blue sky sings over both the lands.
Bind our youth with the *rakhi* of friendship.

(Translated from the original Bengali by the poet himself. Published in Mainstream, *December 25, 1971.)*

To the Mother of a Martyr

SHAHEEDULLA QAISER

(Bangladesh journalist and Communist, Shaheedulla Qaiser, was murdered by Yahya's hordes on the night of December 14 at Dacca, just before the liberation of his motherland. This poem is taken from the anthology, Poems from Bangladesh, *translated from original Bengali by Pritish Nandy and published by the Perspective Publications, New Delhi)*

Your son
is obsessed with music—
how can you
restrain him any more?

Mother,
do you not realise
that there are no barriers
on the path of music?
That afternoon
there was a storm in the river of music;
all your sons and daughters
had joined together
to sing.
Ours were many voices
but we sang a common song;
ours were different words
and diverse tunes
but our music was the same.

Our songs
set the skies smiling,
the children of light came down,
the dust of the earth became our anklets,
a storm rose in the river of music
that afternoon.
Slowly the river of music
was flooded with blood
and then
our songs became birds
and flew away.

Mother,
your children
are now the birds of songs.

With the songs of these birds
a storm will come again to the river:

wait
and you shall see the storm
when your children
return to your arms.

(Published in *Mainstream*, December 25, 1971.)

My Mother, My Motherland

SUBHAS MUKHOPADHYAY

I used to be fiercely in love with my mother,
But I could never tell her of my love
In so many words.
With coppers saved from pocket-money
From where she lay in her bed
Her eyes welled up with tears,
But I could never tell her of my love,
Not in so many words.

How could I then utter those words to you
My mother, my motherland!

Both my hands
And my ten fingers
Hold the memory of the time
Your soil helped me to stand up, mother.

Wheresoever I lay my hands
I touch you,
And my heart-strings sing
Whenever you touch me, mother

Believe me mother,
We are not afraid of those
That extend their aggressive claws
Towards your soil.
We shall take them by the scruff of their neck
And throw them out of your borders.

That done, we shall order our life
Our own way.

Believe me mother
We are not afraid of them,
We are only annoyed that the demons should disturb us
When we are engaged in our sacred rites.

Tight-lipped but untiring of you,
O my mother, my motherland!

(Translated from the original Bengali by Kshitis Roy. Published in Mainstream, *December 25, 1971.)*

THIRTY YEARS OF *Mainstream*

The following is the editorial that appeared in the first issue of Mainstream *(September 1, 1962).*

Demolishing the Wall

Dear Reader,

The other day a letter arrived at our desk from a senior leader of the Indian National Trade Union Congress. Referring to our request for a contribution to our columns, he put a blunt question: "Is your journal affiliated to any political party directly or indirectly?" We had no reason for a hesitant answer: *Mainstream* owes allegiance to no political party or group. Its loyalty is wholly and unreservedly to India and socialism.

Faith in the people of India is our shield and armour; determination to resist all attempts to withhold the fruits of freedom from them our only weapon. It shall be our endeavour to try relentlessly to demolish the wall of misunderstanding, mutual suspicion and even personal pique that divides progressive sections in the country one from another.

Mainstream is meant to provide a common platform for all of them to exchange views on the many thorny and pressing problems confronting the nation, so that the right solutions may emerge.

Our long-range purpose is to try to prevent temporary and unimportant differences from making us lose sight of the goal of Socialism enshrined in our Constitution; to try to create the right atmosphere for a mighty joint effort to break the conspiracy to drag India away from the path of progress; to check secessionist, anti-national forces from gaining strength and endangering democracy and freedom itself.

A big and forbidding task, undertaken by humble people. The sponsors of this venture are no VIPs. They come from the ranks of research scholars and working journalists, lawyers and scientists, men from the common walks of life.

This being our strength, is also our weakness, at least from the point of view of resources. Since Big Money has no place in our scheme of things, our financial resources are very limited, while intellectual resources are ample. Most of those who have taken up full-time work for *Mainstream* have given up safe and lucrative positions to serve the cause dear to them. Despite handicaps, *Mainstream* has been launched in the moral certainty that the common people, whose interests it shall faithfully and unswervingly serve, will in turn help it to survive and grow. The response so far has indeed been heartening, as will be evident on a perusal of the contents of even this inaugural number.

While the nation grows in economic strength, disparities in income grow as a result of the free play of vested interests. The protests against new taxes in various States are a result of this. Dr V.K.R.V. Rao, the noted economist, discusses the limitations and scope of taxation in a developing economy.

This week, as we greet Nagaland as the sixteenth State of the Union, our thoughts turn to the South where the secessionist DMK has gained strength with the help of communal elements and entrenched economic interests. Chief Minister Kamaraj has called for a national front to fight this menace. In this issue the well-known Communist leader, Mohan Kumaramangalam, analyses the origins and aims of the DMK.

Symbolic of the stranglehold monopolistic interests have over our economy is the phenomenal growth in concentration of ownership in the newspaper industry. J.P. Chaturvedi, one of the founders of the working journalists' movement in India, presents the trends in the last eight years in this context.

In our agricultural economy new trends are seen which may well retard the nation's progress. Bhowani Sen, well-known kisan leader, turns the spotlight on these.

From week to week, *Mainstream* shall strive to bring to your table varied, informative and instructive fare, neither sensational nor dull but honest and objective in presentation. There will be no glossing over friends' defects for fear of hurting, even as no quarter will be given in exposing whatever is rotten and harmful in society. In this difficult task, dear reader, we seek your support, material and intellectual.

Finally, the traditional note of caution: the views expressed by the various contributors in the pages of *Mainstream* are not necessarily those of *Mainstream*.

THE EDITOR

The following is a Mainstream *editorial that remains memorable to this day.*

Tagore for Today

Somewhere in the excitement of National Emergency, the editor has lost his notebook. However, Rabindranath Tagore has, in the abundance of his generosity, lent him his own notebook:

> Freedom from fear is the freedom I claim for you, my Motherland!—fear, the phantom demon, shaped by your own distorted dreams;
>
> Freedom from the burden of ages, bending your head, breaking your back, blinding your eyes to the beckoning call of the future;
>
> Freedom from shackles of slumber wherewith you fasten yourself to night's stillness, mistrusting the star that speaks of truth's adventurous path;
>
> Freedom from the anarchy of a destiny, whose sails are weakly yielded to blind uncertain winds, and the helm to a hand ever rigid and cold as Death;
>
> Freedom from the insult of the dwelling in a puppet's world, where movements are started through brainless wires, repeated through mindless habits; where figures wait with patient obedience for a master of show to be stirred into a moment's mimicry of life.

June 27 *N.C.*

(June 28, 1975)

The following are a few editorials published in Mainstream *over the years.*

Do We Need Nehru Today?

Twelve years ago Jawaharlal Nehru died in harness on May 27. Inevitably, much has changed in these twelve years among his people and in the humanity at large. He was not the man who would have preferred the status quo to change; and if the landscape and the skyline of his country have changed—at places beyond recognition—Nehru, had he been alive, would have tried to understand them, accelerate the process of change.

What we who belong to the generations after him have to ponder over is whether the legacy left behind by Jawaharlal Nehru is of any relevance at all for the Indian people, or, can we afford to disown it with impunity?

There are many edifices in India's political, economic and social life that are indissolubly linked with the name of Nehru. From the unfettered functioning of parliamentary democracy to the building of the public sector, from the rearing of non-alignment in world affaris to solidarity with the progressive forces abroad, from the strengthening of a free press to social reforms by consent—there are many aspects of Nehru's India which today claim our serious attention. And it would be legitimate to pose the question to ourselves if these are mere luxuries which we can ill-afford to maintain in the fastchanging world of today.

In times of emergency, extraordinary measures are naturally sanctioned. They are however taken as temporary arrangements and are not expected to be dovetailed into the system as facets of a permanent structure. Because, new habits tend to grow and new theories propounded which may run counter to the time-tested democratic norms.

Jawaharlal Nehru personally never claimed to be a revolutionary. But by his precepts and practice he tried to instil into the unlettered millions of this great country the democratic temper of a modern parliamentary system, and with it also he tried, in his own way, to bestir them with the vision of building a new India of hope and promise.

Forty years ago when he urged upon a subject nation the need to commit itself to socialism, Jawaharlal Nehru was not indulging in airy-fairy do-goodism. From the platform of the Lucknow session of the Congress, he, as its President, enunciated his understanding of socialism which has become classic for every democrat in this country:

"I see no way of ending the poverty, the vast unemployment, the degradation and the subjection of the Indian people except through socialism. That involves vast and revolutionary changes in our political and social structure, the ending of vested interests in land and industry, as well as the feudal and autocratic Indian states system. That means the ending of private property, except in a restricted sense, and the replacement of the present profit system by a higher ideal of co-operative service. It means ultimately a change in our instincts and habits and desires. In short, it means a new civilisation, radically different from the present capitalist order."

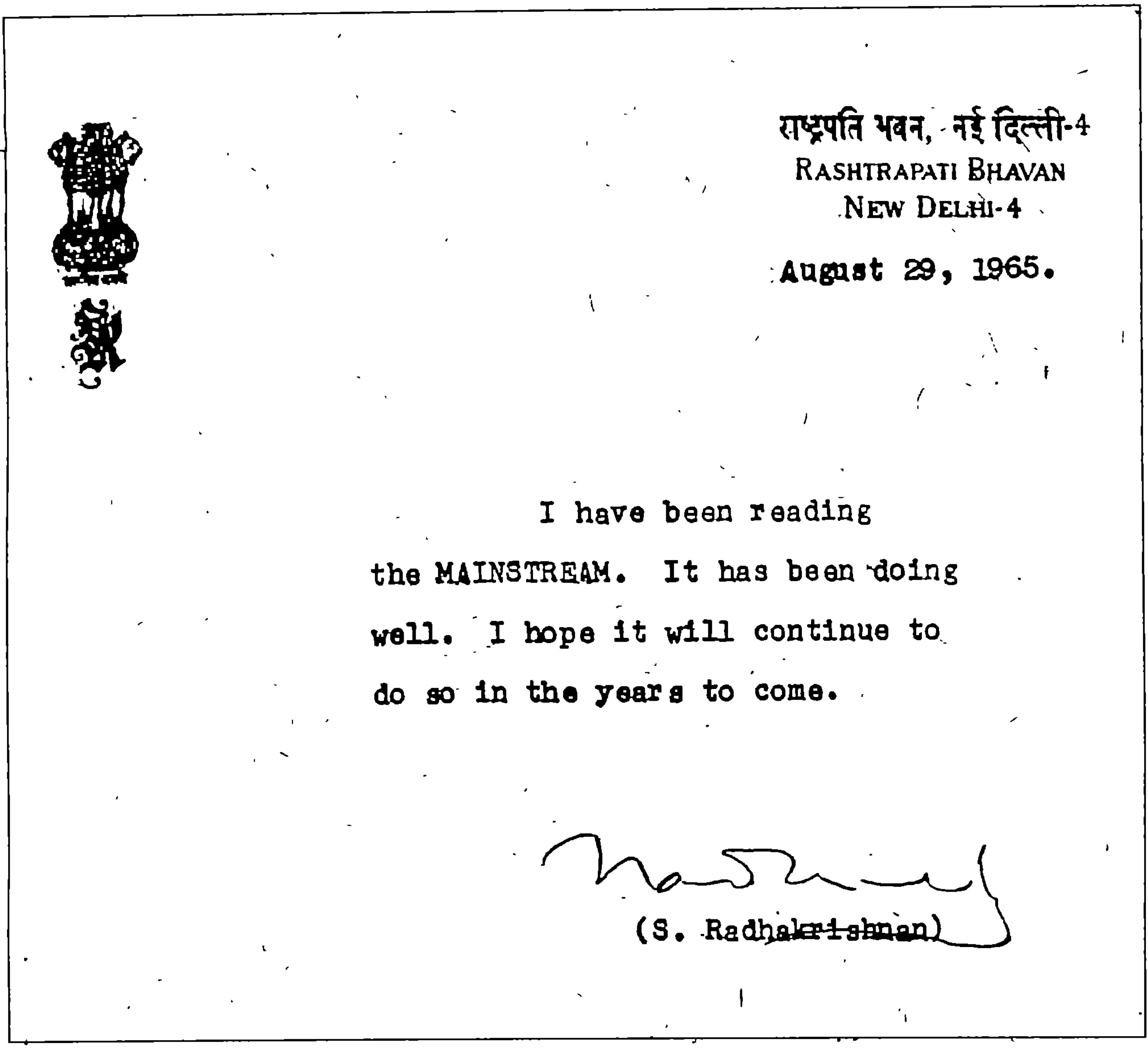
Nehru was no doctrinaire but he was no opportunist either. Socialism for him, was not just a case of "serving the poor" as is being made out by a lot of infantile sermonising today. It is worth recalling how he berated such vulgarisation:

"A strange way of dealing with the subject of socialism is to use the word, which has a clearly defined meaning in the English language, in a totally different sense. For individuals to use words in a sense peculiar to themselves is not helpful in the commerce of ideas. A person who declares himself to be an engine-driver and then adds that his engine is of wood and is drawn by bullocks is misusing the word, engine-driver."

The realities of present-day politics, Nehru never ceased to attempt analysing them. It was he, more than anybody else in position of authority, who educated the political workers as also the masses at large, the inevitability of ideological divergence between the status-quoist Right and the forward-looking Left. In a report to the AICC at Haripura in 1938, Nehru warned: "An attempt to drive out the Left, if successful, would be fatal, for it represents a vital part of the movement without which it would lose much of its flair and become increasingly wedded to petty reformist activities. It would spread confusion in the mass mind, more especially among the peasantry, and thus weaken the Congress. I feel that some such attempt has been made during recent months and it has created considerable bitterness."

Thirtyeight years later, as the members of the AICC meet this week, they need to be reminded of this warning born of wisdom because of the emerging phenomenon of mod-politics which denies this reality—a politics that can only undermine the fibre of the national will for building a new social order.

Many of the institutions that have come up in our



राष्ट्रपति भवन, नई दिल्ली-4
RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN
NEW DELHI-4

August 29, 1965.

I have been reading the MAINSTREAM. It has been doing well. I hope it will continue to do so in the years to come.

(S. Radhakrishnan)

country during the nearly three decades of independence need to be thoroughly examined so that we may assess how they, each one of them, help or hinder the process of democracy and social change. Side by side, new ventures have to be boldly undertaken so that the down-trodden may not only get a better deal but also have a sense of belonging, and with it our independence can be strengthened.

In this context we cannot help remembering a noble son of India who also gave his life while in harness this week three years ago. To Mohan Kumaramangalam, the need to translate the behest of Nehru in terms of social advance was the highest form of patriotism, and it was this conviction that inspired him to undertake, even during his brief span in office, such courageous measures as the nationalisation of coal-mines, libeating thereby from virtually bonded labour over five lakhs of miners. It is a matter of shame that such a measure of far-reaching national benefit is not defended by Congressmen today from attacks by juvenile politicos, prodded by ignorance or misled by propaganda of the vested interests.

It is no truism to say that this nation faces today the most formidable challenge from political philistinism since the one that faced Jawaharlal Nehru before Lucknow forty years ago. As we pay our humble homage to his undying memory, we are tempted to use the words that one poet wrote two hundred years ago, about another, a fearless crusader: *Thou shouldst be living at this hour: India hath need of thee.*

May 27, 1976 *N.C.*
(May 29, 1976)

Good-bye to all that

There comes a moment in the life of a paper, as in the life of many an individual, when the sense of purpose is in danger of being lost by the constraints of circumstances. Such a moment has come today for *Mainstream*, after more than fourteen years of toil and tribulations, of successes as well as setbacks.

Throughout these fourteen years, there has never been any questioning of the cherished values, the ideals and principles, born out of the struggle of this nation for freedom, democracy and a new social order. To strive for such an objective, the unity of forward-looking forces has been and shall be the essential pre-requisite. As it has grown over the years, *Mainstream* has, in its modest way, endeavoured to bring about such a unity without fear or favour. It has faced many an ordeal and it can humbly claim that it has never deviated from the path of fearless and independent journalism.

Times have changed, and with them, the values. The political process, its semantics and its very style and purpose, pose questions which Time alone can answer. And to face such an extraordinary situation requires courage—courage not of the foolhardy but of the patient and the silently alert. Battles may be lost but wars are won by firm adherence to clear perspective. In this week of the birth of Christ, it is well to remember his words:

> *Wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat.*
> *Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

If the changed landscape of today nips the prospect for *Mainstream* to continue, there is no regret on the part of those who have served it as also of those who have helped it. The labour itself has had its own reward. To those who have stood by us through many a storm, we acknowledge their support and affection with unreserved gratitude. Today, *Mainstream* closes its present chapter with the proud satisfaction of having tried to serve the right cause in the right spirit and with no dearth of dedication.

There is no room for depression. As winter has come, spring cannot be far behind. And with the first sproutings of spring shall *Mainstream* reappear.

We shall overcome.

December 21

Nikhil Chakravartty

(December 26, 1976)

Left and Long March

From West Bengal's historic Tebhaga movement and the massive peasant agitation in Telengana in the forties to the current wave of farmers' assertive agitations led by the landed gentry in the rural areas in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and elsewhere—that not only marks a distance of three decades but provides a sad commentary on the slide-back of the Leftist forces which, getting flabby through preoccupation with parliamentary politics to the exclusion of mass politics, have allowed the initiative to pass into hands that can hardly be considered progressive or representative of the toiling millions in the countryside.

It is necessary in the current context to recall the leadership and organisation the Left was able to provide to the rural havenots in those distant days and to take note of the failure to utilise the long interval between then and now to widen, deepen and strengthen the rural base which alone could have provided a radical direction to the socio-economic advance of the country. It is not as if the sudden emergence of a Sharad Joshi in Nasik as some kind of a hero of the farmer lobby was a total surprise that caught the progressive parties and sections unawares. It is rather that by consistent and unpardonable failure to unite the middle and small farmers with the landless agricultural workers on a common platform against the unwaveringly pro-rich policies and actions of the powers that be, the Left parties have offered the countryside, full of revolutionary potential, on a platter to the well-to-do farmers who have always been in a position to thwart radical ideas and measures inimical to vested interests and also corner all gains.

That successive Governments at the Centre and in practically all States, whatever their proclaimed objectives, have been promoters of the interests of the urban as well as rural rich, is not a matter for debate; it is a matter of record, as evidenced, for instance, by the fate of the much-talked-about land reform measures piously placed on the statute book, or by the atrocities perpetrated systematically against the poorest sections. The growth of power of the farm lobby can be traced back to the pre-independence decades, but in free India the scuttling of Nehru's plan for the introduction of cooperative farming by the Charan Singhs both in and outside the Congress may perhaps be seen as a watershed, and the violent agitation by Tamil Nadu farmers under Narayanaswami Naidu's leadership in the late sixties and thereafter as a landmark. What followed in Karnataka recently and the continuing events in different parts of the country are too fresh to need recounting here now.

It can hardly be disputed that the farmers have a case, as Finance Minister Venkataraman after much cogitation has thought fit to concede this week. The urban monopolists—the large industrial houses and traders with political patronage—have been pampered much more than the better-off farmers, while the middle peasants and the small peasants have always received a raw deal at the hands of the Central and State Governments. Resources for fighting elections, including mobilisation of "vote banks", have been the major consideration, and the so-called vote banks provide proof of the total absence of effort to bring the weaker sections in the rural areas together, including the middle, small and marginal peasants, many in the last two categories having been reduced to a new kind of serfdom because of the cornering of developmental benefits by the few to the detriment of the many. The lessons of the Green Revolution were not learnt by those who should have learnt them and prepared themselves in advance.

Leaving aside the concessions made from time to time by the parties in power, especially before each election, to help the urban as well as the rural rich to strengthen themselves and wield more and more political "clout", to use an expression that has become popular now, it cannot be denied that the big industrialists and the affluent traders have been the chief beneficiaries of political freedom and economic development in the last three decades. The farm sector, despite being the solid base of the national pyramid, has received stepmotherly treatment; the demand for economic prices for farm produce has only to be stated to be seen to be justified. But the claim that the farmers' agitation led by Naidus and Joshis is for the benefit of the entire rural population is patently phoney, for the majority of the rural population, precariously placed as or below the poverty line, have never gained from these agitations, as seen in the last twelve years in different States.

Lifting the rural poor out of the morass of deprivation, social and economic, has not been part of the farmers' demands which, after some initial resistance, are always conceded step by step. In the case of the leadership of Tamil Nadu farmers, or Karnataka farmers, or Maharashtra farmers, the miserable wages and level of living of the bulk of those who work on land and depend on it for keeping body and soul together have not figured, except as an occasional and casual after-thought. In a word, there is little to differentiate Charan Singh's "Asli Bharat" and Sharad Ioshi's "Our Bharat" and "Their India". They mean the same thing, even if one of them claims to be non-political or apolitical.

Even with this serious limitation, however, no one concerned about India's overall progress can countenance the disdain with which industrialists and their mouthpieces try to dismiss the agitations now gripping rural India. It is perhaps gratifying that some of them at least realise that the demand for better prices for farm produce is one in which even the middle and small peasants who need to sell some part of their produce are interested. But then it is also true that if the trend of the agitation as well as the attitude of the government does not change, the conflict of interest between the prosperous farmers on the one hand and the landless and the deprived classes on the other is bound to get intensified. Many of us may not mind such polarisation, but the rulers had better be alive to the potentialities of the developing situation.

The attempt to condemn the farmers agitation as "politically motivated" need not be taken seriously; there is hardly any thing that cannot be so described, including Central Ministers" condescending pronouncements or the Government's proclaimed policies and perverted implementation of them.

Even if belated, the six-party front's entry into the agitation should enable the Left, even at this late hour, to give the movement a proper direction. At the time the Left and Democratic Front-sponsored Long March to Nagpur is on. Whether it can give the needed turn to the nation is to be seen; the task is no less than to move from the tail end to the vanguard position in a new movement of the rural masses. It must be noted that those participating in the Long March are demanding among other things a decent minimum wage for the agricultural labourer, with automatic adjustment in relation to the cost of living index, and a weekly holiday—points that naturally do not figure in the of demands of the Nasik-inspired sections. Elimination of middlemen and dalals is another major demand.

But the central point, is organisation of the rural poor—something that has been neglected for three decades, to the immense advantage of the well-to-do who wield real power in the rural set-up.

The Long March can be a new starting point for radical, if not revolutionary, change only if it also leads to self-introspection by the Left so that this becomes the starting-point of a massive nationwide effort to organise these sections which constitute the hard core of Our Bharat or Our India or whatever you call it in the language of imported eloquence.

December 17 C.N.C.

(December 20, 1980)

Wisdom in Short Supply

The security environment in which the Republic of India steps into the thrity-eight year of its eventful career this week, is, to say the least, disturbing indeed. While one earnestly hopes that the Pakistani arms build-up along our frontier may not escalate into one more tragic war between the two neighbours, the climate of confrontation seems to have already set in. This by itself is an extremely unsettling development which not only threatens to vitiate normal relations between two important countries of South Asia—thereby undermining the very foundations of SAARC—but also to disrupt the entire foreign policy projection of India, with its priority concern for world campaigns for nuclear disarmament and for the dismantling of the apartheid. The holding of the AFRICA Fund summit in New Delhi this week is a tribute to the confidence reposed in India's leadership by the entire non-aligned movement. The tension along the Indo-Pak frontier threatens to disrupt this focus of our foreign policy perspective, apart from adding one more tension spot in the trouble-tossed continent of Asia.

More serious is the impact of any Indo-Pak tension on the internal situation in India. A warlike fever in Indo-Pak relations poses a threat to our national integrity. Placed as we have been, this may grievously affect Hindu-Muslim relationship, vitiated in recent years by the phenomenal mushrooming of communal organisations while the government has so far failed to move in the matter beyond the precincts of pious platitudes. A new dimension to the Indo-Pak animosity is the backing that the Khalistani secessionists in Punjab have been getting from Pakistan, which, in the event of heightened tension, will be a matter of serious concern for our security apart from embittering Hindu-Sikh relations.

Despite the Prime Minister's rather glib assertion at his recent press conference that "the economy on the whole is looking very good", careful observers realise how difficult is the economic situation where resource raising has practically come to a standstill, while the so-called liberalisation of the economy under the present government has not brought the expected benefits: on the contrary, the foreign exchange reserve has been badly depleted. In such a precarious situation, the high cost of any military conflict can be back-breaking indeed as the burden of the previous wars in the sixties and seventies could be felt for years afterwards.

In such a far-from-reassuring scenario, what strikes one as perhaps the most disturbing is the amazingly juvenile manner that the governance of this country is being conducted today. From the pronouncements and functioning of the Prime Minister himself one senses an extraordinary lack of serious application to complex problems. Ad-hocism seems to be running riot. This could be seen in the handling of such formidable problems as the continuing crisis in Punjab and the mounting communal violence in different parts of this country; whether it is the Gorkhaland or managing the economy, there is a conspicuous lack of any long range thinking. This is equally true in foreign policy, whether it is in the handling of the Tamil question in Sri Lanka or working out a realistic approach towards China; or examining in depth the perspective for Indo-US relations or about the future of SAARC. The persistent impulse for quick effect betrays a singular reluctance or incapacity to evolve a serious policy approach.

Such a frightening political vacuity is sought to be filled up by shibboleths and exhortations which neither stir nor convince. While the Prime Minister's cohorts are engaged in projecting his image in the style of a PR exercise for marketing a consumer item, Rajiv Gandhi himself has been displaying an unbelievable aversion to sustained and serious examination of issues and problems confronting his government. He has chosen to distance himself from his political colleagues to a measure unthinkable for the leader of a government entrusted with the responsibility of such a vast country as ours. As one closely watches the New Delhi scene, one cannot help getting worried at the spectacle of a Prime Minister choosing to be cut off from his ministerial colleagues to an extent that no political leader of even a small country would risk to go in for.

A political leader to be effective needs a well-run party at his or her command. Without a party worth the name a political leader, however eminent he or she may be, becomes paralysed while the living links between the leader and the masses get withered away. Whatever be the ideological pursuits of a leader, he or she can hardly afford to neglect party building excecpt at his or her peril. In the two years of his being the President of the Congress-I, Rajiv Gandhi has virtually dismantled whatever party organisation was left behind by his mother. His periodic announcements of measures to gear up the party has ceased to be taken seriously. In fact, his supreme inaction on this score has become a matter of ridicule among senior Congressmen. Many of them were taken by surprise when Rajiv at his recent press conference blandly said he did not ask for the resignation of office-bearers of the AICC, for they had to send in their resignations to the party President when it had been conveyed to them that he wanted them to do so. Nor were they amused by Rajiv's remark: "I am watching their performance", because they have felt that all the sudden changes in the past two years have come in fits and starts without any evaluation by the party President. The state of the Congress-I party organisation is such that it can hardly be in a position to withstand any crisis at the national level and the party organs have been so badly emasculated that in any critical development, they cannot save the party President himself.

Sometimes one comes across in history and in the contemporary world, a political leader having a weak party set-up to back him, nurturing the bureaurcary and building it up as his or her bulwark. What is Rajiv Gandhi's record on this score? There has been a lot of talk in the last two years about streamlining the administration to make it efficient and accountable. But actually it has ended up in plenty of smart talk, flourish of supercilious air and astonishing resistance at going to the root of the problems that beset the administration in the context of our times and in the setting of our country. What is perhaps the most disconcerting is the display of arrogance in dealing with officers in his government. One had thought that after his headline-hitting angry outburst against Anjaiah, the then Andhra Chief Minister—which had cost the Congress-I party dearly in Andhra Pradesh—Rajiv Gandhi had perhaps got over such display of temper of his greenhorn days. But a series of recent incidents have belied that expectation. In fact, the new year score of the Prime Minister on this count threatens to be distressingly impressive. The public display of temper against an officer over a trivial matter during his Andaman holidaying, leading to his instant removal from his assignment, has been widely noticed.

More serious was the Prime Minister's conduct in humiliating two senior officers—Bandhopadhyay and

Shastri—during a recent session of a parliamentary consultative committee, caused considerable embarrassment for the Ministers and MPs present. If one were to examine the details of this incident, it becomes clear that the Prime Minister was totally in the wrong in insulting his officers. Notwithstanding the touching defence of the Prime Minister in the press by Dr Najma Heptullah, there is no gainsaying that there was a singular lack of propriety and fairplay in his conduct on that occasion. Much in the same style has come the report of high-handed conduct of his Railway Minister in dealing with a Vigilance Officer in course of a conference.

What has transgressed all bounds is Rajiv Gandhi's shocking behaviour towards Foreign Secretary Venkateswaran. Details of this episode are now public property thanks to the enormity of the scandal. At his press conference on January 20, when a Pakistani correspondent quoted the Foreign Secretary having said that the Prime Minister would be visiting Pakistan as the SAARC Chairman, Rajiv Gandhi replied with a smirk: "You will talk with the *new* Foreign Secretary soon." Venkateswaran who was present at the press conference had no foreknowlege of his going to be replaced, for the Prime Minister did not care to inform him about it. As was to be expected of a person of integrity and self-respect, Venkateswaran promptly resigned from government service.

The episode has actually hurt the Prime Minister and his government more than the Foreign Secretary. In an unprecedented sweep, the media reactions condemned the Prime Minister's petulance with almost striking unanimity. His Ministers were dumb-struck; in course of the next thirty hours, the present writer met five Cabinet Ministers and three Ministers of State none of whom could find a word of explanation for their leader's conduct, while most of them expressed concern over his style of functioning. Equally significant is the instant support for Venkateswaran by the Foreign Service Officers' Association, a move without precedent in its record stretching over three decades. What is perhaps more serious is the repercussion of the episode on the diplomatic world. India has a long record of sobriety in the conduct of foreign affairs: against such a background, it would not be surprising if many of the chanceries of the world begin to wonder if things had gone haywire in New Delhi where the Prime Minister is found to be blissfully unaware of the consequences of discrediting and publicly humiliating the head of his Foreign Office.

Nobody questions the right of the Prime Minister to discipline his officers if they go astray from their briefs but nobody would grant him the prerogative to humiliate them in public. The Caligula style functioning did not help the Roman Empire, and would certainly not be relished in a vibrant democracy like ours.

The fact of the matter is that at least in Venkateswaran's case, there was no brief at all. Not only with regard to Pakistan but China and other crucial spheres of foreign policy, the Prime Minister himself has been indulging in statements which are often contradictory and betray a conspicuous absence of any serious thinking. One is inclined to believe that a coterie having the Prime Minister's ear—neither his Foreign Minister nor his Ministerial colleagues—is interested in getting rid of persons of integrity and putting their own chums in key posts.

From these and other incidents one is worried at the Prime Minister's incapacity to evaluate the personnel in his own government. There are quite a few laggards and intriguers thriving under his benign protection, while on the plea of gearing up his administration, Rajiv Gandhi picks up as the target of his attack some of the ablest of officers in the government. D. Bandhopadhyay who had to face the Prime Minister's wrath has a legendary reputation of a dedicated officer with a calibre which any governemnt anywhere in the world would be proud of. Venkateswaran's *outstanding* abilities, sharp intellect and sterling patroitism bring out the qualities of leadership in him which a government worth the name cannot fail to recognise. But in the hothouse of Rajiv's establishment super-smart Alecs seem to be preferred to solid intellect.

The hauteur displayed in these cases that have of late attracted wide negative public response is not confined to officials as part of a drive against bureaucracy—as some of the Prime Minister's cronies have mumbled lately in his defence—but could be noticed even when Rajiv Gandhi recently addressed the Science Congress delivering the homily to the eminent gathering to abjure "mediocrity". The scientists, of course, were too polite and honourable to retort that the physician could as well heal himself first.

Rajiv Gandhi has to realise that with all the image-building via TV does not make a leader, not certainly the leader of a nation. The officers and professionals are public servants and not his domestic staff. The government is not the private enterprise of any Prime Minister: whether he likes it or not, there can be no privatisation at least in this area.

Although history seems to be at a discount in the Rajiv establishment, he would do well to read and ponder over what his gradfather wrote to the Chief Ministers thirtyfive years ago just after the opening of the Parliament elected for the first time under adult suffrage: "The governance of any country in the world today is no easy matter; the governance of a great and varied country like India is perhaps as hard a task as any in the world today. Any person who is associated with this governance must approach this great task with humility as well as with a measure of faith."

The edifice of this great Republic was built upon the foundation laid down by such great minds. Rajiv Gandhi is expected to protect and preserve and not squander this precious heirloom—precious to the entire humanity that is India. It's time for him to grow up in maturity and be guided by the tenets of wisdom.

January 24

N.C.

(Republic Day 1987)

The Blood and The Seed

AGOSTINHO NETO

We
from far-flung Africa
and above the treachery of man,
across the majestic and unconquered forests
across the flow of life,
which runs anxious, eager and abundant in the rivers' roar,
through the melodious sound of muted drums
through the eyes of youthful multitudes,
multitudes of arms, of pain and hope
from far-flung Africa
beneath the claw
we bleed from grief and hope, from sorrows and from strength,
bleeding on this earth disembowelled by hoes,
bleeding with the sweat of forced labour in the cotton fields,
bleeding hunger, ignorance, despair and death
in the wounds on the black back of a child, on a mother, on honesty
the blood and the seed
from far-flung Africa
black
and bright like mornings of friendship
desirous and strong like the steps of liberty.
Our cries
are drums heralding desire
in the tumultuous voices, music of nations,
our cries are hymns of love that hearts
might flourish on the earth like seeds in the sun
the cries of Africa
cries of mornings when the dead grew from the seas
chained
the blood and the seed
—see, here are our hands
open to the brotherhood of man
united in certainty
for the future of man
for right, for peace, for friendship.

From our toes, roses grow,
perfumed with the river Zaire's tenacity
and the grandeur of Maiombe's trees.
In our minds
is the road of friendship for Africa,
for the world.

Our eyes the life-blood
are turned towards hands beckoning love in all the world
hands in future—inspiring faith in the vitality
of Africa, the human land of Africa
of far-flung Africa
regenerating under the sun of hope
creating bonds of brotherhood in freedom from want
from the yearning for peace,
the blood and the seed.

For the future—here are our eyes
for peace—our voices
for peace—our hands

from Africa, united in love.

(This poem by Dr Neto, the late President of the People's Republic of Angola, was reproduced from Sechaba, *quarterly organ of the African National Congress,* South *Africa. Published in* Mainstream, *April 3, 1976.)*

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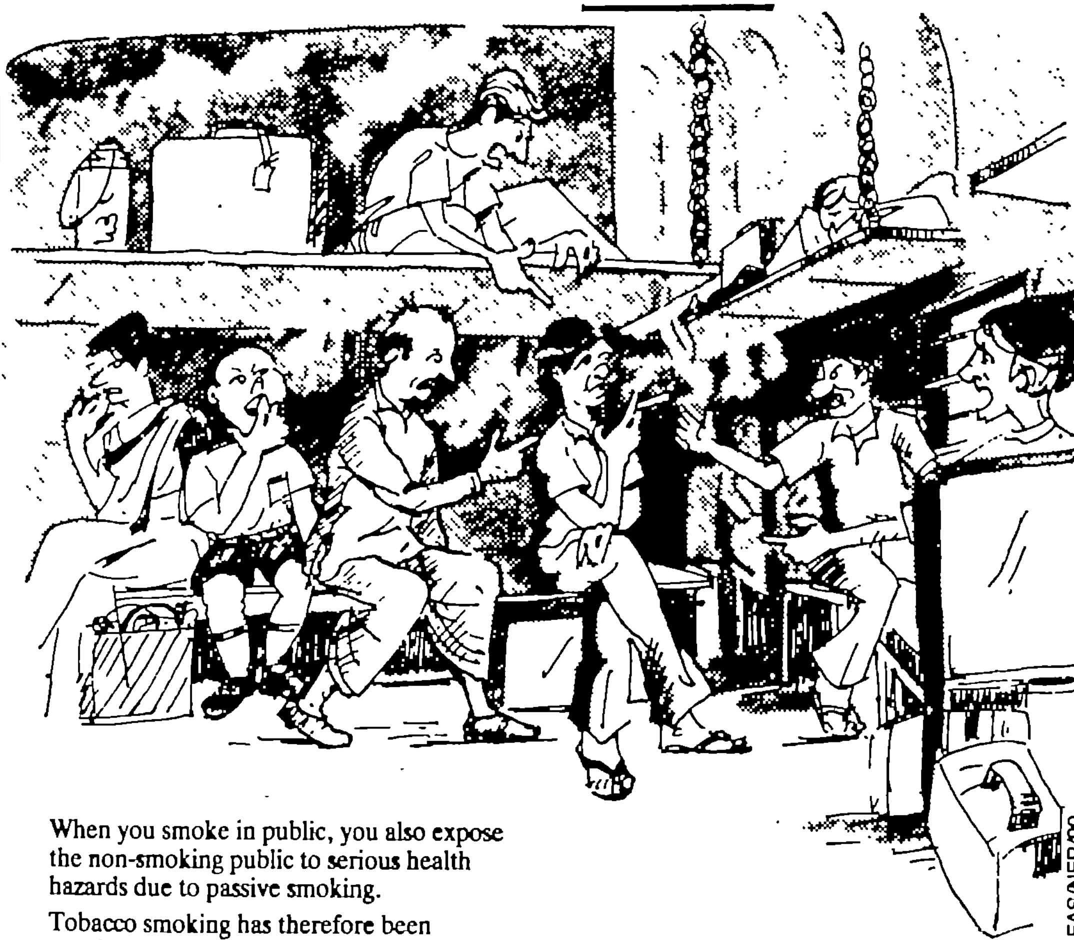

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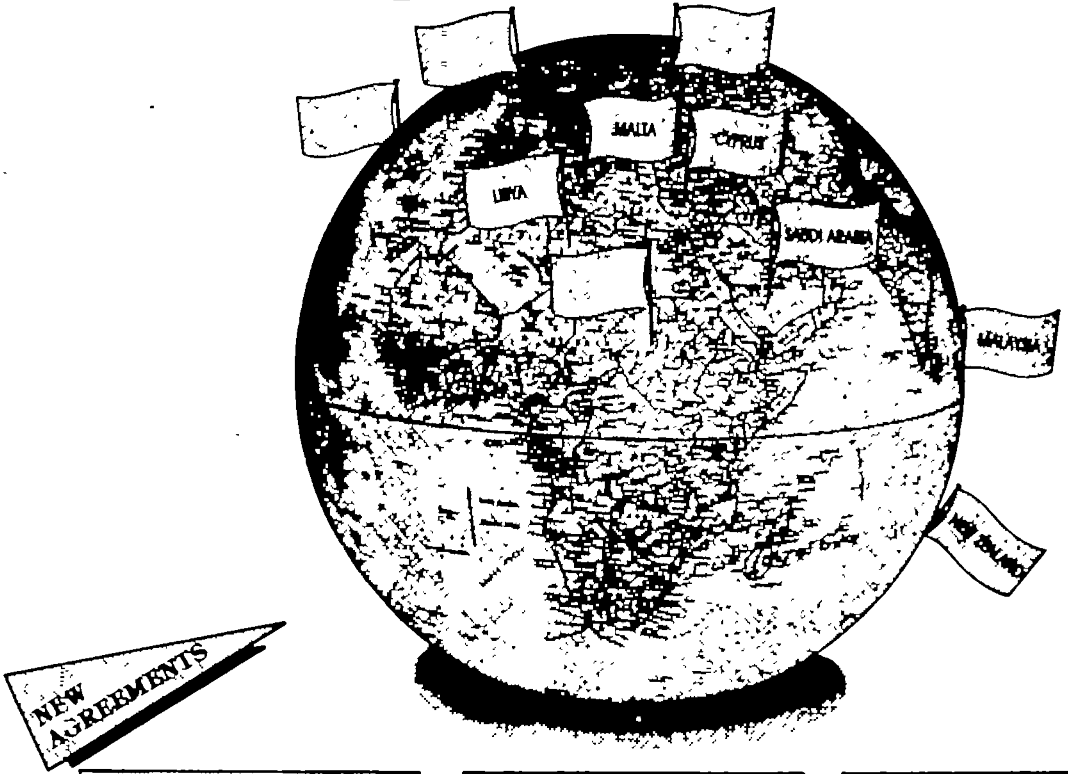

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1953 Hillary conquers Mt. Everest

1965 Russian cosmonaut Aleksei Leonov walks in space

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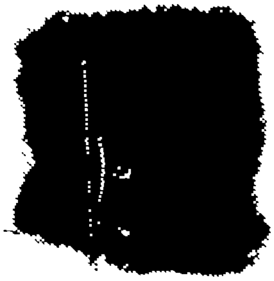
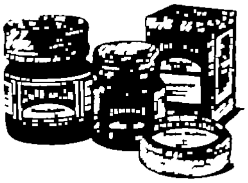


1991 The birth of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)



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A Lady Member of Parliament

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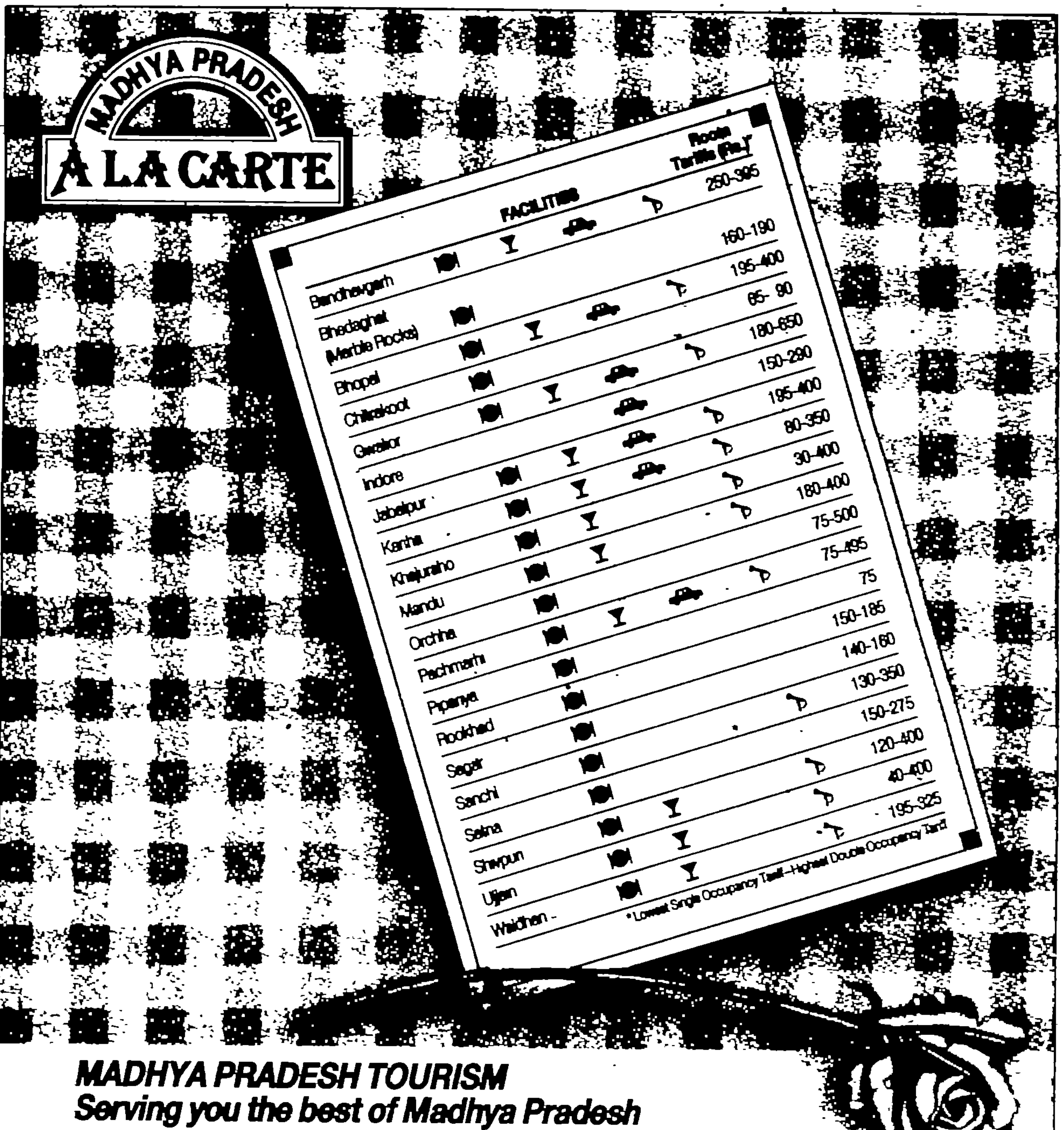

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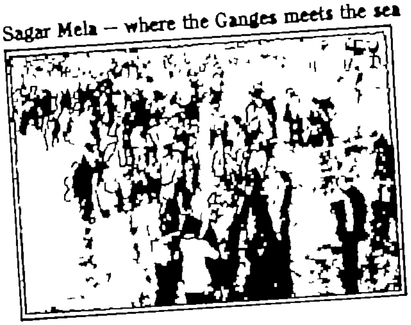
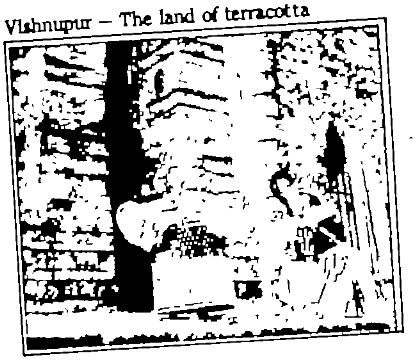
Sagar Mela — where the Ganges meets the sea



Vishnupur — The land of terracotta



The sea of Digha and Bakkhali. The Himalayan mountains. The forests of Doarse. The ancient ramparts of Gour, Pandua and Murshidabad. Santiniketan, the poet's abode of peace. The terracotta of Bishnupur and many other wonders. West Bengal is a land of incredible variety and festivity. From the hills to the bay, the story unfolds at every step. Round the year, the air is filled with festive spirit!

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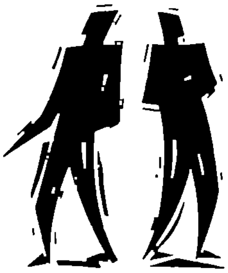

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KAGARLITSKY'S INTERVIEWS

POLITICAL NOTEBOOK

Not Sorrow but Atonement

The vandalism that brought down the Babri Masjid structure on December 6 will remain a Black Sunday in the annals of independent India. Like the insensate violence of fratricidal communalism of the partition days that culminated in Gandhiji's killing fortyfour years ago, the demolition of the Babri Masjid will remain a symbol of shame for the nation, and particularly for the majority community which permitted a bunch of blackguards to pose as its guardian and get recognised as such.

While anger and anguish over this ghastly incident have overwhelmed millions in this country, there is no escape for certain elements in public life from being held responsible for this despicable act. The BJP and the RSS leaders who backed the so-called *Dharma Sansad* issuing the *fatwa* for the *kar seva* have to unequivocally own up the guilt for having collected such a huge number of people around the disputed area by whipping up raging frenzy which was beyond control. And the BJP bosses who had been campaigning in support of the *kar seva* were found to have beaten a retreat when the mob was actually demolishing the mosque—an ignominious commentary on both their capacity and courage. Those who incite a crowd and lack the guts to face and halt it are unworthy of claiming to be leaders. Their moral posture which they flaunt as part of their *Hindutva* should have the honesty to offer public apology for this shocking abdication of responsibility on their part.

The BJP leadership is accountable for the grave misconduct on the part of the Uttar Pradesh Government which the party was running. Chief Minister Kalyan Singh was giving assurances to the Central Government and the Supreme Court which turned out to be thoroughly bogus. If he had any idea about the importance of the commitments he had made to the Supreme Court, he should have anticipated the grave risk he was taking in handling an unmanageably massive crowd, which by its very nature was beyond any discipline. Instead of asking for more Central force, Kalyan Singh was protesting against the despatch of whatever the Union Home Ministry had despatched as a matter of precaution.

The point to note is that the BJP Government in UP, like the rest of the BJP-VHP-RSS combine was trying to run with the hare and hunt with the hound. They were stoking the frenzy for *kar seva* all over Uttar Pradesh and beyond, while at the same time, assuring the judiciary, the Parliament and the public that the disputed areas would not be touched as per the Supreme Court directive.

Not only that. In the critical days after the National Integration Council meeting on November 23, the senior BJP-RSS leaders were working out some settlement terms with the Central Government. The terms of these negotiations, which the present writer can vouch for, were, firstly, the Babri

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Masjid disputed structure complex would be adequately protected until the dispute is settled by dialogue or due process of law, and the UP Government would invite the Centre, if it is so desired, to send its force to reinforce the State Government's security arrangements. Secondly, there would be no *kar seva* in violation of law. Thirdly, the Centre would make a one-point reference to the Supreme Court under Article 143 and the Court's opinion would be accepted as binding by both the Centre and the UP Government as also the BJP-RSS combine. Fourthly, the Centre would express its support for expeditious disposal of the case about the disputed plot now pending before the High Court. As these terms were hammered out, an impression prevailed on the eve of December 6 that perhaps the crisis was on the way of being defused. In fact, the BJP-RSS leaders were expected to persuade the *Dharma Sansad* not to precipitate the crisis.

The question now arises whether the BJP-RSS leaders were diabolically agreeing to these terms while preparing for the demolition of the Babri Masjid; or, were they themselves outstripped by the blitz attack of the mob? The fact that Advani resigned from the post of the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, coupled with the RSS leader Rajendra Singh's statement that the vandalism on December 6 was a "grievous" setback for the Ram temple cause, might be put up by them in their defence that they were themselves overtaken by the developments. Be that as it may, there is no doubt that before the bar of public opinion in India and abroad, the BJP-RSS combine has no option today but to acknowledge their guilt for the heinous act of violent destruction. It is not just a question of owning up moral responsibility, but substantive responsibility for whipping up frenzy and then giving in to mob-violence and thereby desecrating their commitment before the highest court of law and the supreme tribune, that is, Parliament.

The BJP leaders have to bear in mind that the rule of law has to be respected if they do not want to put their party outside the pale of law and the Constitution. More than once during these crisis days, the BJP spokesmen have talked about "the majesty of law", and now they themselves connived, if not actively involved, in the blatant defiance of the Constitution. The pulling down of the Babri Masjid structure is not just a matter of religious frenzy, but the blatant assault on the rule of law and civilised conduct of public affairs. Here is the essence of their guilt.

In the history of contemporary India, this is how terrorism has crept into politics. Whether it is the Akali Party or the Asom Gana Parishad, one finds the moderate parliamentary leaders using the rowdy terrorist groups as their battering ram against the adversary and in course of time, they themselves become the captive of the militants, as many of the distinguished Akali leaders have become today in Punjab politics. What has happened at Ayodhya looks like the curtain raiser of the very same type of political adventurism coming over to the BJP. The RSS leaders may have survived the stigma that stuck to them after Gandhiji's assassination, but there is grave doubt whether they can come out of the present crisis intact. The more mature among them would soon have to make their choice here and now.

In the Aftermath

S.C.

The mosque was eloquent History,
Everything else was shrouded in mythology.

Yet they, under the spell of fiery oratory,
Chose to chase the mirage of a myth,
Pull down the building
And build hatred in their hearts

When I, a citizen of this vast land
With the pulsating impulse of History behind me,
Watched helplessly in speechless agony.

My dreams lie shattered,
My country split
And its future back to the tribal past.

I know not how to atone for my immoral silence
For History shall not forgive me.

◆

LOOKING at the predicament facing the Congress and its government today, there is little doubt that public opinion has already marked out those in power as being guilty of dereliction of duty. There is no room for passing the buck to the UP Government, since it was as much the Centre's solemn charge to protect the Babri Masjid structure.

It was all the time given out that the Centre was on the alert even while the talks for a settlement were continuing. When para-military forces were sent, one can very well ask, why these were not sent in adequate strength, at least to guard the disputed structure? Even if a fully equipped Army unit had been posted to guard the disputed structure, it would have acted as a deterrent, and the shame of the Indian state not protecting a place of worship of its citizens would not have come upon our country. This is the simple charge of any government claiming to rule from New Delhi as the guardian of a secular state. The Prime Minister himself had made the solemn commitment on August 15 in his Red Fort speech saying that the mosque would be protected as much as the government would like the proposed temple coming up.

In this context, this writer needs to acknowledge in all honesty the validity of the criticism voiced by some observers that the Centre dithered in imposing the President's Rule in UP immediately after the NIC meeting when the *kar sevaks* were yet to gather. Hindsight makes it clear that such a pre-emptive strike might have averted the tragedy of December 6. At the same time, such an action of dismissing an elected government could have been misconstrued at that stage as a partisan move with poor legitimacy.

The exploitation of religious sentiments for political purpose has become the bane of Indian politics over the years. The opening of the lock at the Babri mosque complex and the subsequent permission of *shilanyas* on the disputed spot were done by the Congress under Rajiv Gandhi to collect Hindu votes. The passing of the Muslim Women's Bill in the wake of the Shah Bano case was done by the Congress to gather Muslim votes. If the Janata Dal took the help of the BJP to form its government at the Centre, the Congress too did not hesitate to vote along with the BJP to oust the same Janata Government at a moment when the Janata Dal fell out with the BJP's clamour over the same Babri Masjid issue. Even the Left in the late sixties did not have any qualms to form coalition governments with the Jan Sangh at the State level. The cumulative effect of this exploiting religious faith for electoral gains today is that the BJP leadership at this moment, instead of being branded as having violated the tenets of the Constitution, is regarded by a large body of Hindus, particularly in North India, as being heroes who have dared to defy the law to uphold the urge for Ram's temple.

With nobody having a clean hand on the issue of pampering to communalism, the BJP-RSS combine has been able to go so far in initiating a totalitarian communal approach as could be seen from their moves to change names of places and rewrite text books apart from the ghastly deed at Ayodhya. This multipronged communal approach can hardly be halted by mere seminars on secularism, but only by launching a nationwide mass movement for Hindu-Muslim amity, which alone can provide the surest guarantee for genuine secularism in the country. While swift administrative action to halt communal violence is imperative at the moment, the building of communal amity on sound footing can come only through relentless mass campaign. All parties will have to unequivocally abjure the slightest communal bias in political life with relentless vigilance.

Assault on Rule of Law

The following is a statement issued by Prof Upendra Baxi, the Vice-Chancellor of Delhi University, in his capacity as a Professor of Law, Delhi University on December 8, 1992 after the Babri Masjid was pulled down:

As a citizen of India, I join the national lamentation at the destruction of Babri Masjid by those who believe that might is right India stands diminished before history and the world by this vandalism

The wreckers of the shrine have dealt a mortal blow to the integrity of judicial process, the rule of law and the Indian Constitution.

This new barbarism of Indian politics must be interrogated and arrested by conscientious citizen effort. Citizens must demand a national atonement in this hour of national shame, they must contribute a new sense of solidarity by vigilant insistence on exemplary punishment of those found guilty, and mobilise community efforts to assist all victims of strife which has now so tragically begun Not merely must the Masjid be rebuilt but also enduring citizen endeavour should divest all communal forces of even minimal legitimacy.

Our common future lies in constitutional secularism; it should not be allowed anymore to be a plaything of power

This applies equally to all communities, as is brought out by the ugly demonstrations in the Jamia Millia over the secular stand of a distinguished scholar. Hollow men do not make History, but unmake it.

Indian nationalism shall not endure by preaching hatred and deceit and disdain between brother and brother. Out of the ruins of the Babri mosque must rise the shining mansion of communal harmony. We, each one of us, have to pledge ourselves as our brother's keeper. What we need today is not sorrow but atonement.

December 9 N.C.

Reflections on Ayodhya Tragedy

BAREN RAY

Massive events unrolling in quick succession and telescoped within a few days have changed the political visage of the country. There came the well-planned action by the *kar sevaks* comprising of selected and well-trained cadres of the *Sangh Parivar* in their hundred thousands first in assembling in the disputed Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid site in Ayodhya and then their precipitate action against the nearly 500-year old structure of the mosque while the forces of law and order were kept at bay at a distance utterly unable or unwilling to intervene.

The protection of the religious structure had been vouched by the centuries-old tradition of the country, by the secular structure of independent India, specifically spelled out in the Constitution and repeatedly reassured by the highest judiciary of the state. All that was brought down together with the stone structure with the help of the blatant lies and deceit in which all the involved parties, the Ministry in Uttar Pradesh, the BJP leadership both in Parliament and outside, the spokesmen of the

VHP and the RSS, and many of the religious leaders had all, separately and collectively, made their contribution in deception by way of assuring the Central Government that the *kar seva* would be peaceful and symbolic and no forcible demolition will be attempted. It is now evident that there was a detailed plan, how exactly the structure would be brought down, by how many people and using what implements, while the milling crowds would provide an impenetrable human shield to let the operation continue for some six hours. Even if every single spokesman who had made those statements did not know all the details, cumulatively they were all lying, consciously and deliberately.

The Central Government was indeed on a very difficult wicket right from the beginning which was certainly not the making of the present Prime Minister and his Cabinet. One of the central facts of the political scene since the 1991 general elections was the massive increase in the strength of the BJP—both seat-wise in the Lok Sabha and in so many State legislatures as well as in the overall vote tally. This was a tangible political reality—a negative development—which could not be denied. Fundamentalism is not a plague which visits only other bad countries, it can afflict ours too. Social scientists may investigate as to which sins of omission or commission during the long rule of the premier party of the country (unrelieved by any effective counteraction on the part of the Left and democratic forces) had brought this about, but since the beginning of 1991 that was the stark reality which could not be wished away by closing one's eyes. With such an unusual swing in people's opinion in a fundamentalist direction the problem certainly could not be tackled by mere recourse to the forces of law and order. The BJP had swelled its votes precisely by promising something about the Ram Janmabhoomi.

(Continued on page 35)

Attack On Media on Black Sunday

The media was the target of the protagonists of Hindutva *who pulled down the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya on December 6. The following reports in* The Statesman *and* The Pioneer, *filed by eyewitnesses and those subjected to the attacks by the* kar sevaks, *expose the real character of the miscreants who stormed into the Babri Masjid and razed it to the ground. The first report, by* The Statesman's *Staff Correspondent, appeared in the December 7 issue of the daily; while the second, by Praveen Jain, was published in* The Pioneer *(December 8).*

—Editor

Taste of Kar Sevaks' Fury

With policemen reduced to the role of bystanders, and occasionally acting as cheerleaders, the media bore the brunt of the *kar sevaks'* fury in Ayodhya on Sunday. Photographers, in particular, were at the receiving end with many having been beaten up, some ending up badly injured. Photographic equipment was snatched, damaged and thrown on the ground, and reels exposed. It was almost as if the BJP-VHP-RSS-Bajrang Dal cadres knew they had done something the world was better off not seeing.

Signs of the media being a likely target were available the previous day itself. A senior leader of the Hindu combine, Paramhans Ramchandra Das, announced at a public meeting that "*patrakaron ko apne chashme badalne honge*" (the media will have to change its perception). Ashok Singhal of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad had gone a step further in accusing some media organisations of "misreporting".

Others who have been making provocative statements against the media include Vinay Katiyar and Acharya Dharmendra.

Ramesh Chand of *Visnews* was hit on the head and had to get 16 stitches. Pablo Bartholomew, representing a French agency, received serious head injuries and had to be rushed to hospital.

Several reporters, including the representatives of *The Statesman*, were the target of attack of *kar sevaks* on a roof-top who tried to hit them with stones and even boulders. The refrain of the *kar sevaks* was that journalists should stop reporting.

Mark Tully of the BBC was taken to a room and threatened he would be killed if he persisted with "making false broadcasts" about the Ayodhya situation. Tully had to seek police protection. Peter Heinlein of the Voice of America was similarly roughed up.

When the stoning began at 11.50 AM, a group of eight reporters and all the photographers were at the spot where the *kar sevaks* were assembled. Other media representatives were on the roof of the Manas Bhawan, the headquarters of the VHP situated next to the scene of action.

As the mob surged forward, the *kar sevaks* turned on photographers with almost the same degree of ferocity they were to show soon at the mosque. In the first wave of assaults, the team of *Parakh*, a Doordarshan programme, were picked upon. Both the reporter and cameraman were hit with lathis.

Then it was the turn of other photographers. Among those who were assaulted or had photographic equipment snatched or damaged were Praveen Jain, Pramod Pushkarna Thapa, Nitin Rai, Sanjay Sharma, T. Narayan and Alok Mitra.

Seeing the police unresponsive and the *kar sevaks* unmanageable, many journalists had to seek refuge in a small temple behind the mosque.

Those at Manas Bhawan fared little better. The RSS volunteers posted there were openly contemptuous of the media, making jeering remarks and quite evidently enjoying the discomfiture being caused by the rampaging mob. When journalists tried to leave the spot, they were jostled and pushed. Some of the volunteers were heard remarking that journalists should be lynched.

There were reports of an attempt by some RSS men to push a local photographer off the ledge of a building.■

(Courtesy. *The Statesman*)

'I am Ashamed'

PRAVEEN JAIN

If you think the demolition of the Babri Masjid was a spontaneous one, then hear this: On Saturday afternoon a BJP Member of Parliament forewarned me of the events to follow on Sunday.

He smiled as he directed me to the spot where the *kar sevaks* were rehearsing how to bring down the 465 year old structure. The *kar sevaks*, with ropes and rods, had roped a rock pile and were tugging at it from different directions. As events turned out later, this was the very manner in which three domes of the mosque were brought down the next day.

Near the mosque, a concrete dais had been erected. Hordes of *kar sevaks* from several directions were periodically racing towards the dais. This was the run-up to Sunday afternoon.

December 6

Early on Sunday we made our way to the spot where the BJP-VHP combine was expected to carry out the "symbolic" *kar seva*. All photographers, journalists and cameramen were directed to a *dharmashala* (Manas Bhawan). The terrace had been cleared for us.

As events moved forward the Bajrang Dal activists scampered onto the terrace. Their numbers increased till we were outnumbered. Sensing trouble, I slipped away.

It was a sensible move, as I realised later. The journalists and camera crew who stayed back were pulled and jostled around, their movie cameras were snatched away and flung down from the terrace five floors above the ground.

On the ground there were thousands of people milling around. They were all chanting "*Jai Siya Ram*" They converged on me. Even though I was caught unawares I managed to get away from the spot. Someone in the mob snatched at my open bag. Later I realised that the *kar sevak* had made off with Rs 2500.

Even as the crowd chased me, its attention was caught by another hapless photographer who was literally shooting from the hip as he ran. The mob set upon him giving me a fleeting opportunity to move towards the dais where the BJP-VHP leaders were seated. On the way I met two other photographers—Nitin Rai and Pablo Bartholomew. On the spur of the moment we decided there might be safety in numbers and were glued together in fear.

By then the hordes had swarmed up the domes and they fell upon it with *trishuls* and whatever else they had in their hands.

It would have been unthinkable not to get this on film, even if this was the last thing we did. Out came our cameras and we got clicking. This focussed attention on us. *Kar sevaks* armed with *trishuls* and daggers chased us. I was luckier than the other two who were nabbed, stabbed and beaten.

Later that night journalists who managed to get away from the site told us the mosque had been turned to rubble.

December 7

Early in the day, sporting a saffron bandana, printed entirely with the word 'Ram' and wearing saffron sweaters and carrying only a minimum of photo equipment in our pockets we made our way stealthily to the complex.

Kar sevaks were clearing the rubble to make way for some sort of a structure. To take pictures from so near would have been suicidal. Through a small window of a house in the vicinity I squeezed the shutter six times.

I breathed freely. Not outside the house. Not in Faizabad—12 kilometres away. Not on the flight back. But at the office when the prints came out fine.

They were the pictures of Hindus giving Hinduism a bad name. I am ashamed. ■

(Courtesy: *The Pioneer*)

World Economy: The Larger Perspective

JOHN KENNETH GALBRAITH

The following is the text of the lecture delivered by the distinguished economist and former US Ambassador to India at a meeting organised under the aegis of the Rajiv Gandhi Institute for Contemporary Studies in New Delhi on November 18, 1992

—Editor

There comes a time when one should step back and seek to envisage the larger world scene. In concentrating on detail, we, on occasion, lose sight of the larger picture. When, as now, we live in a time of marked economic change, even of recent revolution, this larger view is especially to be sought.

As was Gaul, the modern economic world is divided into three parts. There are, first, the poor lands of the planet—those variously characterised as the undeveloped countries, more optimistically as the developing countries and, with intense economic neutrality, as the South.

There are, next, the relatively advanced countries that are now emerging to a market system from comprehensive socialism, commonly called Communism. These are the countries of Eastern Europe that were once behind the now vanished Iron Curtain and the republics of the former Soviet Union.

And, finally, there are the fortunate lands, those that have escaped from the poverty and stagnation that, without much change, afflicted all the people of the world until a couple of centuries ago. They include Western Europe, the United States and the English-speaking countries in general, and Japan, Taiwan and the other developing lands of the Pacific Basin. In this company, in arriving but not yet arrived, I place India.

◆

IN looking at the larger world and its present problems, I seek to do so without the constraints of ideology. This is not the age of great theoretical systems. Those who so believe are in escape from thought—and all past experience. This pre-eminently, is the age of intelligent pragmatism. The economic problem must be examined and judged not for its conformance to theoretical pattern but for its efficacy in the particular time and context. I urge against the frequent retreat from thought to a presumed controlling doctrine.

The poor lands—the so-called South—are the most difficult case. Suddenly released from colonial authority, they were left with the most demanding task of our time. That was putting in place efficient, effective, non-corrupt and stable democratic government, this being the essential basis of economic development and human contentment. Nothing so destroys all hope for economic well-being as corrupt and/or totalitarian governments that are concerned, inevitably, not with economic and social progress but with consolidating and holding their own authority. This, one notes, can be the burden of governments ostensibly of the Left and the Right. And nothing so destroys both people and progress as internal conflict.

One cites here the sad experience of much of Africa and of other ex-colonial lands. There was a major mistake in the process of decolonisation: time and effort should have been committed, perhaps under the auspices of the United Nations, to helping guide former colonial governments to a stabel democratic alternative. Only those countries that have had a stable democratic alternative to colonial rule—Singapore, Costa Rica, India, a few others—have had a reliable rate of economic development and an otherwise tolerable existence.

There was another error. Far too much emphasis was placed on industrial investment and development, far too little on education and human investment. Once it was understood: an educated populace is the first requirement for economic progress. That essential fact was forgotten; impressive steel mills, great hydroelectric dams, glistening airports, were too often sited amid ignorant people. I have previously made the point: in this world there is no literate population that is poor, no illiterate population that is other than poor.

Finally, in many cases there was too much attention to urban development and well-being at the expense of agriculture. In some instances, prices were kept low to serve the presumed interest of an urban proletariat. This, too, was a prime error ending in food insufficiency and hunger. Of all economic needs, that for food is the first. Here, India was a brilliant exception. It gave agriculture the technical attention and the economic support so vital for salvation.

If we are to talk effectively about economic development now and in the years to come, the emphasis must be on political stability, on human investment and on sound, sensible agricultural policy. These, we now know, are the prime requirements of progress.

I come to a different matter, happily not relevant here in India but sadly relevant to the world at large. This is internal conflict and death common in our time.

In the worst cases of internal disorder and cruelty, we must have a new and internationally sanctioned suspension of sovereignty. Where, as recently for long years in Lebanon, Mozambique and Ethiopia, now disastrously in Somalia and Bosnia, there has been human cruelty and slaughter, there must be effective action to arrest it. There must be a United Nations mandate for governing countries that do not and cannot govern themselves. International law outlaws attack by one country on another; such attack is not within the accepted rights of sovereign power. No longer can domestic conflict and the associated starvation and death be protected by sovereign authority. Sovereignty must be suspended until peace is restored. This involves no slight change in public attitudes. The change is now overdue.

◆

TURNING to Eastern Europe and the republics of the former Soviet Union, one sees here an intensely difficult and, in some respects, the most dangerous transition in economic history—the movement from comprehensive socialism to the market economy. It will also stand as one of the most misguided of social actions. It has, for the moment, come close to the exchange of a poorly working economic system for none at all.

In the early days of this change, some—I was one—pleaded for gradualism, for a considered release of economic life to the market. First should have come services, less urgent consumer goods and, as possible, agriculture. Then larger industry, when effective alternatives to the price-controlled and command economy had been brought into being, including the requisite financial and marketing structures.

Instead there was a sudden plunge toward what was thought the capitalist miracle. It has turned out to be no miracle; rather, there has come a period of grave economic deprivation and hardship. Those who urged this course of action, including the International Monetary Fund and not a few ideologically motivated scholars from the United States, could not have had a better design for giving capitalism and democracy a bad name. And from the United States, as also from Japan and other countries, adequate economic help was not forthcoming, help that might have eased the transition. Future generations will marvel at how financial assistance that might have saved democracy and the market system was kept committed instead to no-longer-needed military expenditure. No one should have doubt as to the danger. It is that capitalism and democracy having been seen as synonymous with grave hardship, there will be escape into some new form of totalitarian rule. Or, as now in Lithuania, back to some new form of Communism.

I would urge help to the former Soviet republics as well as to the Eastern European countries. And I would urge that this not be conditional on specified market reforms. Here, above all, the case for pragmatic accommodation to circumstance. Perhaps, indeed, the opportunity has been lost. But the

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forces containing democracy and independence of expression and action are not slight in our time. I hope we can now see how great is our stake in democracy and social tranquillity in what was the Communist world and how deeply these depend on economic success.

I turn now to the fortunate countries of the world. We, too, have economic problems; they are central to any consistent and compelling discussion. Let us also have them in perspective; they are small as compared with those I have just adumbrated. Two—one relatively unimportant, one urgent—now capture our attention.

The smaller problem, seemingly vital in Europe but of worldwide concern, involves capital movements, currency relationships and the marked instability in the foreign exchanges. This, I think, will be recalled, one day, as a minor blip in the larger economic history of our time.

It owes much to the belief that where money is involved, the issues must be deeply important and that the individuals associated therewith are both economically powerful and decisively intelligent. In fact, monetary matters can be derivative and in themselves passive; the great financial operator and sometime financial genius is often merely a mentally adaptable passenger on the great ship of circumstance.

The circumstance is that monetary goals—stable exchange rates—can be achieved only after there is an alignment of internal social and economic policies, including, in particular, fiscal, budget and employment policy. As long as these are individually variant—and, as now, often radically so—stable exchange rates are quite impossible. In Europe a common unit of exchange is superficially a very attractive idea; that it can come before alignment of the controlling internal policies will stand as one of the major economic miscalculations of the age.

The broad thrust toward closer economic relations and to economic unification, notable in Europe, will, I think, continue; modern capitalism with its massive trade and travel, its extensive capital movements, its close communications and its transnational corporate enterprises is by its nature (and unlike one-time feudal and peasant agriculture or early industrialism) an international system. From it comes the basic thrust to a civilised internationalism—this despite the fact that regressive nationalism still accords a greatly welcomed voice to the politically articulate but mentally bereft. As this great economic thrust proceeds, there could one day be the unity in domestic policies that will allow of stability in exchanges and in Europe a common medium of exchange. The results of the premature efforts, the consequences of which have been so recently evident, will stand as the minor historical blip I have already mentioned.

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THE far more serious matter is the current depression in economic activity. This has persisted in the United States for two long years and more. And while we must accept our role as to the origin, depression is now a painful fact in the other English-speaking countries and a threat to the industrially developed world at large. We must, as an exercise in common everyday caution and good sense, accept in the larger world the proposition that Keynes articulated, the modern economy does not necessarily find its equilibrium at full employment; it is perfectly possible for it to enter upon and stabilise itself at an underemployment equilibrium. After two long years this possibility must be recognised, and especially by the new Administration in the United States.

There must also be reflection on the causes of this continuing depression. They, notably in the United States, include the speculative splurge of the 1980s—the mergers-and-acquisitions and leveraged-buyout mania that left corporations with the heavy burden of debt under which they now struggle and which they service at the expense of new investment. There was also the real property boom and collapse with its counterpart in other countries, including Canada, Britain and notably Japan. From the above, especially in the United States, came weakness in the banking system that negated central-bank efforts to expand bank borrowing and associated economic activity. We are now seeing, as often before, that monetary policy, while it can have an effect on inflation, is nearly useless against deflation and depression. One cites again the relevant metaphor; there is a great difference between pulling on a string and shoving on a string.

Finally, in the Reagan years there was a major transfer of income from the poor to the rich. The upper one per cent of American families captured 70 per cent of the growth in average family income in the years 1977 to 1988. The share going to the poor declined. Income going to the rich is not reliably spent; it may be saved, and savings, given the caution of the time, are not reliably invested. A reasonably equitable distribution of income is socially just and a contribution to political tranquillity. It is also economically functional.

As this is written, as I have noted, a new Administration is about to come to office in the United States. It has only one major choice as to policy. That is either to allow the underemployment equilibrium to stand, with the barren hope that time will somehow work a cure, or to move aggressively to reduce unemployment and renew economic growth. For the latter result there is only one sure course of action. That is to set aside for the time concern as to the deficit in the federal budget and, by government action and expenditure, put people to work. In the United States, our roads, bridges, schools, railroads, urban transport, airports and housing stock, particularly the latter, are all in poor and sometime even dangerous condition. And our states and cities are spreading fear and hardship by curtailing essential services, including, notably, for education and welfare support to the poor. The only way to break the depressive equilibrium that does not depend on theoretical formulation is to move strongly on these needs.

This, in the short run, will increase the US Government deficit and the public debt, attitudes on both of which have now reached paranoiac proportions. These attitudes must, for the time, be ignored.

When prosperity returns, the deficit should be reduced. Among the errors of the past years was the running of a large such deficit when its supporting effect on the economy was not needed. All countries must have a disciplined will to adjust taxation and expenditure to the prevailing economic condition. For now, to repeat, the deficit must be accepted. The economic activity and employment so provided is the only design for dealing with the depressive equilibrium that, as I have said, does not depend on fragile theory. It goes directly to the needed result.

In the United States some gain in employment can be had from a shift of expenditure from military to civilian employment. Expenditure on exotic weaponry, now devoid of any justification, is a very inefficient way of creating employment. I would also urge, as did Governor Clinton as a candidate, an increase of taxes on the rich. This does not seriously reduce aggregate demand and has a benign social aspect. Taxation is in accordance with ability to pay. Maybe— a fugitive thought—the resulting effort to maintain after-tax income by the very affluent could have an affirmative incentive effect. Certainly this is as probable as the erstwhile supply-side argument that the rich needed the incentive effect of more income.

In the longer run, this course of action will increase public wealth—there are both the things built and the expansive effect on economic output in general. The Japanese have recently announced such a programme. In Canada a conservative government has let it be known that it is thinking along these lines. In any case, I come back to the main point; there is nothing else of equally certain effect.

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IN the great sweep of modern capitalism, there is a further change which we experience, which is evident where I speak and which some despair. That is the movement of older, established labour-intensive industry from the old countries to the new. The history of the last one hundred and fifty years and more has been of the movement of such industry, old and new, from Britain to the Continent, on to the United States, then to Japan, then to other countries of the Pacific Basin and notably to Korea and Taiwan. The movement now continues to Thailand, Malaysia and with potentially perhaps the greatest consequence here to India. This we join today to welcome.

The basis of this movement is clear: mass industry is constantly in pursuit of a fresh and eager labour force, one that is eagerly in escape from the true oppressions of primitive peasant agriculture and from order, bureaucratic management to the leaner, fresher, often more innovative managements of the new countries.

This movement is a fixed source of concern and even despair in the older countries. There can be no question that for some in those countries it is a cause of dislocation and hardship. It must be recognised, however, as one of the great and inescapable features of modern industrial captialism. It does not leave the older countries devoid. The higher ranges of technology, of deisgn, of entertainment and of education remain with them. It is important, however, that this great process be understood and not be the occasion for ill-considered preventives as protective action. Let us see that there is a broad international division of labour in the modern economic world. I wish here to make clear my commitment to this division of labour as between the old and the new; we should all wish to see it continue. It is part of a great process that is benign in its larger effect and in which we must all be content to participate. ■

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Issues, Non-Issues and Charades

ARUN GHOSH

In two weeks of the winter session of Parliament, no debate has yet taken place on any major economic issue. Are such issues likely to find a place in parliamentary debtates during the rest of the winter session? Judging from the experience of the monsoon session of Parliament, "non-issues" could again take up all the time (and the energy) of the chosen representatives of the people for the remaining weeks of the winter session. Judging from recent events, "charades" are likely to play a more important role in the behavioural pattern of the major political parties, than serious debate on vital issues.

What are the burning economic issues before the country today? Inflation is the most important one, for the impact of inflation is always the hardest of the poor. The widening gap in the trade balance during the current financial year (1992-93), after the policy changes introduced in February 1992, and the mounting burden of external debt, is the second most important issue today. Steadily increasing unemployment (not only of new entrants to the workforce but, in addition, the loss of jobs by people already employed) is another urgent problem. The failure to bring about any "structural change" in the economy—by way of improving the education, health and skills of the people—is the fourth important (and totally neglected) issue; for productivity changes depend, in the final analysis, on the ability of the workforce to participate in the production process.

There are, of course, many other problems, especially in the realm of politics and of governance. But let us stick to economic issues which could make or mar India by the turn of the century. Have we really got over the balance of payments crisis which afflicted the economy in 1990-91? If not, what are the immediate priorities? Is inflow of foreign capital likely to solve our problems? How do we avert a balance of crisis by the end of 1994, when the (rescheduled EFF) loans from the IMF fall due for repayment? How do we avert a balance of crisis by the end of 1994, when the (rescheduled EFF) loans from the IMF fall due for repayment? How do we avert a Latin American type debt trap which may lead to the (enforced) exchange of equity for debt, implying the handing over of prize assets (owned by the government) like the IPCL, the IOC, the ONGC, the NALCO, the BHEL (and other giants in the public sector) to our foreign lenders, when we are unable to meet our external liabilities from 1995 onwards? There are ominous news reports already about discussions with Alsthone GEC for the sale of the BHEL. Is that our answer to the present economic problems of India? Finally, how do we tame inflation, since we refuse to tax the rich? How do we avoid the spiral of devaluation-increased costs-further devaluation-loss in ther terms of trade-increasing deficits in the balance of payments-further devaluation-steady erosion in incomes and levels of living of the people of this country? How do we get a spurt in the productivity of workers in the infrastructure and key intermediates industries, which is an essential ingredient for increasing productivity in the economy in general?

The author, a noted economist, is a former Member of the Planning Commission.

But the portents are that none of these issues is likely to be debated in the remaining weeks of the present winter session of Parliament. What happened during the monsoon session is likely to be repeated. True, there were then important national and constitutional issues at stake. Ayodhya was then the centrepiece of discussion, as it has again turned out to be, during the winter session of Parliament. (There appears to be a design in the periodic resurgence, or a climactic turn of events on Ayodhya, before and during every session of Parliament.) During the monsoon session, there was also the important constitutional issue of which (dissident) members of parliament should be seated where. (This time, the Supreme Court verdict on the Mandal Commission report is likely to provide the necessary fireworks.) Not a single economic issue got debated during the monsoon session of parliament; even the Question Hour was blanked out. And we are witness to repetition of this performance so far in the winter session of Parliament.

What are the current obsessions of the major Opposition parties? The BJP is obviously determined to keep alive the Mandir issue, in order to stay alive politically. After all, notwithstanding the protestations of the leadership, the BJP-VHP support base is that of small shopkeepers who love inflation, and who—under the pretext of freedom from "Inspector Raj"—like to see income tax officers off their backs. The present regimen suits the tax evader.

The Left parties, genuinely confused after recent events in the USSR and China, are correctly of the view that pandering to religious issues poses the greatest threat to India's unity in diversity. However, their disdain for economic issues remains inexplicable and surprising. How can the Left parties remain insensitive to the interests of the working classes, of the rural landless labourers, of the small and marginal farmers, of the urban construction workers, of other unorganised labour?

That brings us to the motley group in the Janata Dal (and its breakaway groups). One understands their basic concern for the backward sections of society, for the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, for the OBCs. One must point out, however, that the economic salvation of the OBCs is not likely to be achieved by the reservation of government jobs—which are likely, in future, to be fewer and fewer—but through better educational opportunities. Tamil Nadu realised this several decades back; and as a result, the OBCs are now a powerful force in Tamil Nadu.

What one does *not* understand in the above context is the charade of highjacking of trucks carrying imported wheat, and the sale of this wheat—to passers-by (or to a mafia?) — at lower than free market prices. One may oppose, in principle, the import of wheat; but why this charade? Why the *dharna* against the import of wheat, which has already been contracted for? One can understand and appreciate the opposition to a cut in fertiliser subsidy, because such a subsidy would dampen inflation today. The farmers should not be deprived of both the fertiliser subsidy and the higher price. But the solution is not a steadily increasing procurement price; the solution lies in greater government investment in agriculture. If the public distribution system breaks down as a result of *dharna* against the import of wheat, who will be the loser? Who are likely to benefit from another hefty increase in procurement prices? What is going to be the effect on inflation?

And now we have the prospect of a more spectacular charade centering on Ayodhya insofar the as BJP—VHP alliance is concerned.

One can understand Devi Lal or Sharad Joshi or Bhanu Pratap Singh behind such moves. One cannot understand V.P. Singh or Sharad Yadav or Ram Vilas Paswan taking up only this issue selectively. Not one word has been said about the likely debt trap, about the failure of the new economic policy to stem the balance of payments of deficit. Whom does the Janata Dal purport to represent? The rich, surplus farmers, or the poor Scheduled Caste and other Backward sections of the population? How do the latter gain from a spurt in food prices which may occur if the public distribution system breaks down? We need to remember that short-term rhetoric and political expediency does not pay even in general elections. We have seen that in 1977, in 1980, in 1989 and in 1991. To whom do the weaker sections of the population turn for redressal of their problems? Once, it was the Congress party which stood for them. Today, one does not know, for it is the Congress party which has unleashed the so-called 'reform programme' which hurts the poor and benefits the rich. The Left parties have always represented the depressed, the backward sections of society. But today, the Left parties must rediscover a credible philosophy (as Mao Zedong once did in China), based on the ground realities of the Indian situation.

The Janata Dal had evoked great hopes in 1989 as the representatives of the backward sections of society. After all, the economic development of a country involves the betterment of the people of the country; and one has to first initiate the upliftment and improvement of the backward sections of the population, to achieve long-term gains in overall productivity. But now, the leaders of the Janata Dal—both the Dal and its breakaway groups—appear to be enamoured by the "globalisation" of the Indian economy. They are obviously keen to also pander to the demands of the likes of Sharad Joshi and Bhanu Pratap Singh and Mohan Singh Tikait. Their articulated demand is that procurement prices of foodgrains must be raised further and further. The leaders, however, appear to have forgotten the need for ensuring employment to all at a remunerative wage. If that be so, whose battle are they fighting? Of the rich farmers or the OBCs? One has not heard many leaders talk of the inherent dangers of the package of policies unleashed on the Indian economy, the sum total of which is likely to increase the burdens of the poor, and at the same item increase the danger of external payments imbalance and an external debt trap, with all the consequences thereof.

We need greater sincerity in political life. More than ever, one recalls Gunter Grass' reminder to the Germans in 1969—in a lecture on the sigificance of Albrecht Durer's engraving of *Melencolia I* — "Stasis in progress. Hesitation, halts between steps... Knowledge that engenders disgust. All that is applicable to us". (*From the Diary of a Snail*, 1972).

But is anybody Left-of-Centre listening? ■

Land Reforms and Kunja Babu

D. BANDYOPADHYAY

The author, the erstwhile Secretary of Rural Development and the former Executive Director of the Asian Development Bank, was intimately associated with land reforms in West Bengal and played a crucial role in the successful execution of 'Operation Barga', one of the key achievements of the Left Front Government in the State. He is now touring rural areas of the State at the request of the West Bengal Government to assess the performance of panchayati raj institutions. However, keenly interested in knowing the state of land reforms, he is always trying to get an idea of the reality on that score. The following write-up, based on actual experience, gives some insight into the situation on the ground. —Editor

We stopped at the Kranti crossing at village Jharmetiali, Lataguri Gram Panchayat in the district of Jalpaiguri. It was about 4.45 PM. We sat on a wooden bench in front of a grocery. It displayed among its merchandise packets of Britannia biscuits, matchboxes, strings of single-use shampoo pouch, toiletry alongwith food stuff. Obviously, those "urban" consumer items were being sold. It presented a radical change of inventory goods from what I noticed a decade-and-a-half ago in similar shops in similar surroundings. It indicated not only a change in the consumers' choice but also a certain degree of affluence hitherto unknown in such areas. It also reflected the effect of the all-pervasive consumer culture propagated aggressively through our electronic and print media, for good or for evil.

Gradually, a crowd collected, seeing some strangers alighting from cars escorted by a police jeep and idling on the wayside bench of a village shop. Apart from breaking the monotony of a long car journey, we also had a simple mission.

We were being told again and again at the State headquarters, at the Zilla Parishad level and even at the Panchayat Samiti (Block level) that the two legs on which the entire thrust of West Bengal's rural development rested were land reforms and the panchayati raj institution, that each reinforced the other and that the land reform programme did contribute significantly in enhancing agricultural output in the State by releasing the latent creative energy of the poor peasantry who were the beneficiaries of the programme. Not only were the beneficiaries putting in more labour per unit of land, capital was also being invested in land—a phenomenon largely absent in the pre-land reform era.

Theoretically, that was what it should be. That was the economic rationale of land reforms. But to make credit, technology, seeds, fertiliser, etc. available to the village poor would require a massive organisational effort apart from significant attitudinal change on the part of the credit institutions whether commercial banks, cooperative societies or other State or parastatal financial institutions. Thereafter, higher level of production having been achieved, did the poor farmers get remunerative price for their marketed commodities. Redistribution of ceiling surplus land to the land-poor farmers or recording the names of sharecroppers was not the end of land reforms. In fact it was the beginning of a long and arduous process of agrarian restructuring for making the non-viable farming households economically viable. In all the socialist countries, it had been the experience that in the process of socialist reconstruction the problems of the farming sector were the most intractable. Hence the glib talk of almost one-to-one causal relationship between the increase in agricultural production and land reform, that we had been hearing up and down the line made us slightly uneasy. We were too willing to believe it, but we wanted some evidence.

No one denied the fact that during the last decade-and-a-half which coincided with the formation of panchayats in West Bengal, and 'Operation Barga' which was completed between 1978 and 1982, there had been substantial increase in agricultural production in absolute terms. One hypothesis could be that such an increase was in response to market impulses and a package of programmes for agricultural improvement of the State and Central Governments. Unless it could be established that the poor peasantry—the beneficiaries of land reform—had access to credit, improved seed, fertiliser and pesticide, irrigation water, and extension services, by mere application of more labour per unit of land significant increase in production could not be achieved. Greater application of labour would certainly help increase in production upto a point but diminishing returns would set in too soon, too sharp. Hence we wanted to meet a few recorded *bargadars* and assignees of vested land to hear from them what they had to say on these issues. We took a chance of meeting a few of them without any prior notice by stopping at a small shopping centre at a crossroad at Lataguri.

When the crowd gathered we wanted to know whether there were any sharecroppers. A tall, slim, dark person in his forties with a deeply furrowed face came hesitantly before us. He was not afraid or scared. He stood before us with the dignity of a free man. His hesitancy was because he was wondering what it was all about. After the usual preliminary pleasantries we asked him whether he was a *bargadar* and if so did he record his name. His reply was that he was an "*adhiar*" (half-crop sharer) and that he had the "*barga* certificate". To our further query he told us that the average production of paddy per bigha (0.33 acre) was 10 maunds (38 kilograms, approximately). Previously it used to be six to eight maunds per bigha. Since he felt quite assured that so long as he gave share to the "*malik*" (owner) of the land, neither he nor his children would have any problem about peaceful cultivation of the "*adhiar*" land measuring about 12 bighas (4 acres), he felt encouraged to employ the labour of all his family members and he also put in as much organic manure as he could procure. He could not give adequate quantity of chemical fertiliser as the price was high and he could not get any cheap credit to buy the fertiliser. He also produced some jute but he did not get a fair price. The price that he got just covered his paid out cost and not the economic cost. He had to sell his portion of jute to a local middleman and much later, the middleman sold the jute to the Jute Corporation of India at a much higher price. He was seriously considering discontinuing cultivation of jute in the coming season if he could be told of an alternative profitable crop.

We asked him about his crop-sharing arrangement. He replied that he gave 50 per cent of his crop to the "*jotedar*". This was a bit surprising. He was a recorded *bargadar* and he was entitled to 75 per cent of the gross produce. So we asked whether he knew the law, that he was to give only 25 per cent of the produce. His reply was that he knew the law, that he was an "*adhiar*" of the old owner (now deceased) who treated him well, that when one of his bullocks died the old owner gave him a bullock and that law or no law he would not break the tradition of "*adhiari*" with his present owners (sons of the old *jotedar*) because of the fair treatment he had received so far.

By that time more onlookers had gathered. Among them we spotted an important functionary of the Malbazar Panchayat Samiti whom we had met in the same forenoon at the Malbazar Panchayat office. We requested him to come forward and to share our bench.

He looked a bit puzzled at finding us there. To allay his misgivings we told him that as it was a long drive, we needed a break and thought we might as well talk to some people to know what they felt about the present economic situation. Then we asked him, since he had heard about sharing of produce on a 50:50 basis, instead of a 75:25 basis as provided under the law, what would be his response. In the forenoon, in the Panchayat Samiti office he had told us that he had been associated with peasant movement for a long time and that the major demands of the peasantry having been fulfilled through "Operation Barga" and distribution of vested land, the movement had nothing to agitate for. Hence he and his associates were more concerned about improvement of agricultural production and productivity and diversification of the cropping pattern through better irrigation, high quality seed, better access to credit, diffusion, science and technology, proper marketing arrangement and the like. Absence and/or uneven access/opportunity to these vital elements seriously impeded the growth of agriculture in the post-land reform era.

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THE points he raised earlier in the day were all valid. But here was a case where assuming an average production of 10 maunds of paddy (according to the adhiar's own statement) per bigha, the *bargadar* would have got 90 maunds as his share from his 12 bigha holding; but was in fact getting 60 maunds of paddy. Every year he was being deprived of 30 maunds of paddy which, according to the law, should have been his. In monetary terms, assuming a price of Rs 100 per maund, he was losing Rs 3000 per year in one crop. A considerable loss for anybody and certainly an enormous loss for this *adhiar*! He got slightly rattled by our analysis of the situation. But a seasoned politician that he was, he quickly recovered. Very pleasantly he told us in an undertone that it was a matter of "mutual understanding" between the *adhiar* and his *jotedar* and that was why the peasant organisation did not feel the necessity to intervene to upset the equilibrium reached through mutual understanding in the post-'Operation Barga' era. What was important was to ensure security of tenure through registration of the *adhiars* name in the record of right. That was done during 'Operation Barga'.

Having made his statement, the Panchayat functionary requested a young man to come forward. He introduced this young man as a *bargadar* who inherited his father's right of *barga* cultivation on his (father's) demise. It was very reassuring to find that the inheritance provision of the Land Reforms Act relating to *bargadars* was being acted upon. The young man thereafter produced a receipted copy of his petition which he submitted to the Mal Panchayat Samiti office praying for recording his name as a *bargadar* in respect of some of the other plots which he had been cultivating in addition to his father's holding. The petition was about four months old. The Revenue Inspector who was with us was requested to note down the details of the petition for a quick follow-up.

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THE BDO, Malbazar who accompanied us was searching for an assignee of vested land. He found a person standing at the periphery of the gathering craning his neck to hear our discussion. The BDO knew him and requested him to come forward. He told us that he was allotted one-and-a-half bigha (0.50 acres) of vested land. That he was in possession of it and that he was regularly cultivating it. But he had a complaint. He was cultivating another holding of 10 bighas as a *bargadar* but he was not recorded as such for that holding. The BDO asked him whether he was paying the legal share of the crop regularly to the landowner. His reply was that everyone in his village knew that he was regularly and honestly delivering half the produce of the land to Kunja Babu, the owner, and that he could not be faulted for any breach of the *barga* law. This case appeared to be more serious than the other case of "mutual understanding". We looked at the Panchayat functionary for a reply. The clarification that came was astounding.

The land did belong to Kunja Babu at one point of time. Thereafter under the ceiling law it was declared surplus and vested in the State. This person was Kunja Babu's *adhiar* before vesting. He continued to cultivate after vesting and also continued to give half of the produce of the land belonging to the State to Kunja Babu, the erstwhile owner. One could not expect a more harmonious social order than what we came to know in this case. The land had vested in the State through due process of law. Whoever wanted to take credit for it would get it. Kunja Babu did not feel deprived. He got his compensation from the State which took over his land and he continued to get the usufruct thereof as before. In fact he was beholden to the land reforms process for giving him some money in lumpsum and in bond. The *bargadar* was not disturbed in anyway by such a redistributive process. The leader had no cause for any agitational programme. He could devote himself entirely to global issues like exploitation of the Third World by the First and of the periphery by the Centre.

The total number of beneficiaries of land reforms in West Bengal would be around three million (taking the recorded *bargadars* and the assignees of vested land together). Three cases that we came across by chance at a road crossing on an autumn evening by a roadside shop on the fringe of Lataguri forest were too insignificant against the vast universe of three million. Statistically one could easily ignore them.

But these three cases created a lurking doubt about the state of the land reforms process after all the dust of the 'Operation Barga' had settled down. Could it be that the landowning class having had to make major concessions in legal form were attempting to retrieve the lost ground to some extent by arriving at a new arrangement with the new power structure in rural West Bengal? One wished it was incorrect.

Darkness descended deep and fast. It was time to depart. With the hooting of the siren and twirling of the red light atop the police jeep, the convoy left for Jalpaiguri. ■

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INTERVIEW

Rise of Democratic Left, Anti-IMF Feelings in Russia

Boris Kagarlitsky is a noted figure of the democratic Left Opposition in Russia, standing outside the pale of and sharply distinct from the Stalinists and Russian chauvinists locked in an unholy alliance at present. A leader and ideologue of the Socialist Party which has currently merged into the Party of Labour, Kagarlitsky in this wide-ranging interview—given to Sumit Chakravartty at his residence in Krasnoarmieskaya Ulitsa in Moscow on October 15, 1992—presents a picture of the contemporary scene in Russia and provides a glimpse of the growing stature of the democratic Left as well as the rising anti-IMF mood among the people there.

—Editor

SC: What I was wanting to know from you, Mr Kagarlitsky, is this: can you give me a general idea of the present state of affairs in Russia?

BK: That is very easy. It is described by one word which is 'collapse'.

You see, we have got a very interesting government here: this is a government which doesn't care about industry, about national independence including economic independence, and by the way—one of the most striking things—about the interests of the national bourgeoisie. And this for good reason. It's because the national bourgeoisie is so weak and fragmented and incompetent as well while it is socially and culturally very young, that the government even being pro-capitalist just doesn't have to care about the national bourgeoisie as any kind of important factor.

SC: But isn't the national bourgeoisie in the government?

BK: No.

SC: It's outside the government?

BK: Yes, it's outside the government.

SC: But whom would you describe as the national bourgeoisie?

BK: Well, that's a very good question. The problem is that we have the entrepreneuring community which is so much fragmented that you cannot say whether there is one national bourgeoisie or just several entrepreneurial groups. But what is the definition of national bourgeoisie? These are the groups of entrepreneurs who work for the domestic market.

SC: Just one second. These entrepreneurs whom you are calling national entrepreneurs are linked to foreign capital, aren't they?

BK: No, no. I use the words 'national entrepreneurs' to describe the people who work for the domestic market and usually produce something for the domestic market—local resources. They have a real interest in expanding the consumption of the country, for example. And they really need the expansion of production in general. For instance, they would very much like the public sector to expand for the reason that the public sector is either going to give them orders to produce something or at least the people are going to get higher wages so that they could go to them and buy certain goods from them.

SC: Why should the national bourgeoisie want the public sector to expand? They should be interested in the private sector alone.

BK: Absolutely not. I have met a number of people belonging to the national bourgeoisie. First of all, they know that they cannot get anything from the so-called big privatisation. They cannot get any real share in such privatisation.

SC: These are then small entrepreneurs?

BK: Well, small as well as not that small. Sometimes they are millionaires in dollar terms. But they know they cannot get real profit from such privatisation.

SC: What are they really engaged in?

BK: Well, people who produce spare parts for domestically produced equipment, for example, like Zhiguli cars, or people who produce consumer goods like tooth brushes, for example.

SC: But these domestically produced consumer goods are of extremely low quality.

BK: Yes, of course. That's another reason why the government doesn't care about them because they are producing low quality stuff usually.

And there are some high tech businessmen who are involved in...

SC: Computers?

BK: Yes, but not selling computers. They are involved in developing some software and some hardware. So in respect of these high tech guys even in the private sector they are very pro-public sector.

SC: Why? Do they feel that there could be good competition with the public sector?

BK: No. They don't want to be absorbed by the Western super-companies, and even if there is the public sector it could be a kind of umbrella for them to develop their own businesses. They could get orders from the public sector. But if the Western companies come in controlling the market, they could be just absorbed completely by them.

SC: Swallowed up by them in fact?

BK: Yes, swallowed up by the Western companies. So the public sector is not very dangerous for them in that sense.

SC: But what is the state of the public sector today?

BK: It is disintegrating.

So the point is that the national bourgeoisie's position in terms of the domestic market is not just importing goods from abroad but producing commodities for the domestic market. It is very weak, also quite incompetent often and fragmented—it is fragmented and divided into different groups and clans. That's why the government doesn't care about this new bourgeoisie emerging from the grassroots. They care about either the Western financial institutions like the IMF and the groups linked to the IMF strategy or they care about the bureaucratic class which wants to privatise state property because they control the state. They are just robbers—political groups which control the state property and rob it. These are the strong groups. So the government takes care of their interests because they are the strongest interest groups in the country.

In that sense Gaidar is pretty rational in his policies. You see, those who say that Gaidar goes too far or that Gaidar is a crazy monetarist or that Gaidar is just mad about his liberal ideologies are wrong. Gaidar is very pragmatic, he is not even a liberal in terms of ideology.

SC: In what sense is he pragmatic?

BK: In the sense that, as far as I know him personally, he is an absolutely cynical person who is not interested in any ideology including the liberal capitalist ideology.

SC: You have some personal experience of him?

BK: Yes. As far as I know him, he knows who is the strongest guy right now and which are the strongest interest groups at present. And he just serves the strongest. Since the strongest at the moment are the two groups I mentioned earlier, the whole policy of the government is determined by those two groups.

SC: That is?

BK: The bureaucratic bourgeoisie and the foreign capital which, of course, has its own representatives inside the country. It has its own comprador bourgeoisie inside the country by now. And this comprador bourgeoisie is mostly composed of the same old nomenclatura.

SC: So in this situation is it your purpose to strengthen the role of the public sector as well as the national bourgeoisie?

BK: Yes. In the Party of Labour we had a big discussion and everybody agrees except a small section that as of now there is no direct contradiction between the strategy to defend the public sector and extend support to the national bourgeoisie because the national bourgeoisie is not expanding at the cost of the destruction of the public sector, so there is no immediate contradiction between the two. In the long run this contradiction could emerge. But as of now the people who want to defend the public sector and the ones who want to expand the national private enterprise have their common enemies which are the comprador bourgeoisie, the IMF and the bureaucratic bourgeoisie represented by the Gaidar Government.

SC: And foreign capital?

BK: Yes, foreign capital as well. So it doesn't mean that these two segments in the population view the problems in the same way. But it just means that...

SC: They have common enemies.

BK: Yes, they have common enemies and have no direct issues to fight each other. The national bourgeoisie are not now going to take away pieces of the public sector or at least that is not their priority. Somebody else is now interested in robbing the public sector. So here there is no problem with the national bourgeoisie.

SC: But in the government is there no voice in favour of the national bourgeoisie?

BK: No. One of the most striking things is that if you speak to the small entrepreneurs or even some of the relatively large entrepreneurs who just work for the domestic market, you will find that they attack the government saying exactly the same things that we say.

SC: That is?-

BK: Well, that the government is anti-national, that it destroys the industry, that the privatisation programme is crazy, that you don't have to privatise so fast and so much, that you have to maintain a mixed economy with the public sector and that the Gaidar Government doesn't care about local production and consumption of the people.

Both of us also criticise the IMF. Because, you see, one of the elements of the government policy is to bring down the value of the rouble. For the local entrepreneurs this is a catastrophe because import inputs become very expensive and they are not exporting because they are producing for the domestic market, you see.

SC. Bringing down the value of the rouble is according to the IMF prescription, isn't it?

BK: Yes. And for the local market it is a catastrophe. So the vast segments who cannot export their goods and work for the domestic market the only chance of survival is to have the rouble at a value which is more or less stable.

SC: In political terms who are the people representing the national bourgeoisie?

BK They don't have a party.

SC: No, what I want to know is whether the Civic Union represents their interests.

BK: There are some elements in the Civic Union who would like to represent the national bourgeoisie.

SC: Like?

BK Well, they are just individuals. But the Civic Union is a very heterogeneous group and nobody knows what is going to finally emerge out of it.

In a way it is Nikolai Travkin's Democratic Party of Russia that will get the support of the national bourgeoisie. But this too is not clear because Travkin is so singularly politically incompetent that he might probably not be able to use this potential to his advantage.

If you turn to the Civic Union you will see that it is mostly represented by the oldtimers of the previous regime—the nomenclatura people, and technocrats—industrial managers who don't want the industries to collapse because they are in the industries and if the industries collapse they would be unemployed. On the one hand they want the state to pay for the losses, to continue supporting and subsidising the industries. At the same time they want everything to be privatised and they want to give their own to the privatised industries. So the result is that they want the industries to be still run by the government but all the profits to go into their personal, private pockets. If this kind of strategy were to be realised it would mean that we would have terrible inflation. Because then the government would be forced to just print money. So we would be having an inflation which is much worse than the one we have right now: probably ten, twenty or hundred times worse, I don't know.

In the long run or even in the medium-term, the Civic Union has absolutely no strategy and that is one of its main weaknesses. And it is heterogeneous.

SC: Are the comprador elements also in it?

BK: No, I think it is a technocratic coalition.

So now for the Left there was a big debate as to what to do with the Civic Union. Of course in the short-term there are some points of agreement with the Civic Union. First of all, we say 'no' to the IMF and they also do not say 'yes' to the IMF at least. We are critical of the IMF. They too are critical of the IMF. They don't want to destroy the Russian industry. We also don't want to destroy the Russian industry. So on certain issues there are similarities. But these are very limited.

Thus the position we have adopted right now is that we have to negotiate with the Civic Union and have some formal agreement with them. But we have to understand that we are two different forces, by no means is the Left going to be subordinated to the Civic Union, and by no means is the Left going to accept the role of the Left-wing of the Union or the Left-wing partner of the Union. We are going to be an independent force. On certain issues we could agree, we could probably cooperate. But still the key issue is our independence.

The same thing applies to our unions—the trade unions. I am just now working on preparing the basis of negotiations. There are going to be three sides to the negotiations: the Civic Union, the Russian Federation of Trade Unions and the Party of Labour. The trade unions are backing the Party of Labour.

SC: What is the Trade Union Federation of Russia?

BK: They represent 90 per cent of unionised labour in Russia.

SC: Do they belong to the old guard hardline Communists?

BK: No, these are just new people. To tell you the truth, some of them are terrible opportunists. But there is a strong Left-wing in this Federation which is identified with the Party of Labour.

SC: You see, in our country as well as in the West the Left in Russia—or the Right in your conditions—is associated with the hardline Communists and Russian chauvinists who are more vocal than you.

BK: Well, they are very noisy but their problem is that in terms of public support they have less public support than what we have.

SC: But that is not very clear. Because they hold large demonstrations.

BK. Okay. But in their demonstrations all the people who support them come to participate in them. Nobody among their supporters remains at home because they are active and disciplined. At the same time if you study the opinion polls as of now they have been able to muster at best only eight to 10 per cent of public support.

SC: That means their strength has been gradually declining, would you say?

BK: Yes, there has been a systematic decline in their support and all their leaders recognise this systematic decline. Let's see what happens on October 22 when the trade unions are holding a rally. The Russian Federation of Trade Unions has called the rally and we are writing the resolutions of that rally.

The Stalinists are holding a rally on the twentyfourth. Originally they made a very big propaganda saying that they were going to get one million people. And now they honestly say that it would be a big success if they get 10,000. (Actually 5000-odd turned up, according to press reports.—*SC*)

The trade union rally is expected to be a little bit smaller—but they both will be more or less the same size. But what you must note is that the sizes of the trade union rallies are increasingly growing while those of the Stalinist rallies are steadily declining. Now they are approximately of the same size whereas half-a-year ago the Communist rallies were ten times bigger, you see.

The trend is evident to everyone including the hardline Communists who recognise that they are losing ground while we are gaining ground. That's why some of the clever people among them have started to talk to us. But our problem is that we do not need them very much.

SC: But are they doing everything on their own or are they depending on the chauvinists?

BK: Actually there is no difference.

SC: This rally on the twentyfourth—who will spearhead it? Stalinists or the Russian chauvinists?

BK: It will be the same coalition that calls itself the Right-Left coalition. Actually it is the coalition of the Far Left and the Far Right.

SC: Which are the groups of the chauvinists?

BK: Well, the different brands of monarchists, Constitutional Democratic Party of Russia, Zhirinovsky's party.

SC All of them together?

BK: Yes, they are always together.

SC: Who else?

BK: The Russian Communist Workers' Party and so on.

SC: Including the party represented by Sergei Baburin?

BK: Yes, probably. I don't know personally about Baburin but his group will be there probably.

SC: What about the National Patriotic Front?

BK: Also. They all come together.

SC: But even then you don't expect them to mobilise more than 10,000 people?

BK: Well, probably they will bring 12,000. But that's all. I spoke to the organisers. They are very pessimistic and say even the most enthusiastic supporters don't come to the rallies any more.

On the other hand, the Union leaders point out that when they held a rally in the past and demanded that the government should retreat on certain issues, the government really retreated on certain issues not as much as they would like to but they got a real result immediately. And they say: we are going to still push the government further into retreat on social issues and that is the precondition for political change. That is what Union leaders like Shmakov of the Moscow Trade Union Federation say.

As far as the orthodox Communists and chauvinists are concerned, they called for restoration of the Soviet Union about a year ago, for the whole year every second week they called for the restoration of the Soviet Union. But the Soviet Union has not been restored. They are just not able to deliver the goods.

SC: And now even their strength is gradually declining.

BK: Exactly. Every two or three weeks in spring they promised that the government would be brought down within a week or two. Nothing happened. So their own supporters are very sceptical now.

SC: What is the public support to the government now?

BK: About five per cent. The actual supporters of the government are five per cent. But the supporters of Yeltsin and the government—because Yeltsin is more popular than Gaidar—is about 15-16 per cent.

SC: But Yeltsin's popularity was said to be 46 per cent while Nazarbayev's popularity in Russia was 24 per cent.

BK: In this country opinion polls are conducted such as to compare Yeltsin with, say, Baburin, Nazarbayev and Anpilov. The names are selected in a way as to make Yeltsin appear more attractive. So of course in this way he gets his 30 or 40 per cent definitely.

SC: Because he is more popular than those people?

BK: Yes, that's how they make him look better. That's the technology of opinion polls to boost Yeltsin's image. This was also done in case of Gorbachev before his final collapse.

SC: Since we last met a lot of things have changed.

BK: When did we meet last?

SC: We met in November 1991.

BK: Oh, yes. It was just before the final disintegration of the Soviet Union.

SC: Can you tell me as to how the Party of Labour has grown over the months since we last met?

BK: Well, we had our formal party conference just last Saturday—October 10—in Moscow. Some of the most important trade union leaders of Russia joined the party and that is a very big success. Now we are just in the process of building the local branches of the party. To get registered as a national party we have to build not less than 35 local branches.

SC: Which are the groups that have joined the Party of Labour?

BK: Well, some from the Federation of Trade Unions, the Anarcho-Syndicalists, most of the Socialist Party, some people from the Marxist Platform and the group that is organised around the newspaper called *Revolutsionaya Rossiya* (Revolutionary Russia).

SC: That was the newspaper of the...

BK: Narodniks.

But the most important people are those who belong to none of the groups. So we have the trade unionists, and we have those who belong to none of the groups. If you speak of the politicians they are in one or the other of the aforementioned groups. But usually the people joining the party are not in any of the groups.

SC: Do you have some ex-CPSU members?

BK: Some, but not a lot.

SC: What is the composition like? Most of them are young?

BK: Well, they are different. But most of them are in their thirties.

SC: Are most of them from the working class?

BK: It depends on the area under consideration. Well, if you go to Samara and Perm they are working class, in Moscow they are mostly intellectuals, in Leningrad they are different.

SC: What is your next programme? You spoke of the twentysecond rally.

BK: Yes. And then we will have to work hard to set up our local branches. So we will have to travel around the country, build up the local branches and at the same time organise propaganda for the party.

SC: What is the perspective before your country? Economically you are in a worse shape from what you were a year ago. So what are your projections?

BK: Well, we are in for a very bad winter and after that we will have a really bad spring.

SC: When you speak of a 'very bad winter' I am reminded of what was being said last year. Last year too a very bad winter was predicted. But then last year the prices had not grown so much as this year.

BK: Last year would appear to be very comfortable compared to this year. Let me tell you two jokes. One is that there are four kinds of problems which the Russian agriculture faces: winter, spring, autumn and summer. Four problems which we regularly face (*laughs*). And the other joke that was very common at the beginning of this year goes like this: What is expected of the New Year, that is, 1992? And everybody said: It is going to be kind of average that means worse than 1991 but definitely better than 1993 (*laughs*). I think these are very appropriate jokes.

Well, 1993 is defintely going to be very bad—it's going to be probably the worst year of recession. The situation especially in the first half of 1993 is going to deteriorate dramatically compared to even what is typical for Russia right now. So in that sense it is going to turn into a real national catastrophe. That's why the Civic Union option is still to be supported because a Civic Union Government could be a chance to avoid the total catastrophe. If the Gaidar Government stays on in power one of the options is the disintegration of the country because the regions which are better off would just try to split from the Russian Federation.

SC: And set up independent units?

BK: They would set up independent states. Say, for example, Siberia, or even Leningrad (that is, the present-day St. Petersburg) or Tatarstan could try to have independence. So the whole thing could disintegrate into pieces. That's why the Civic Union option could prevent the disintegration.

But they (the Civic Union) have only very short-term solutions.

Our position is that we could support the formation of the Civic Union Government but that definitely must be a transitional government also because the Civic Union has no strategy—not even a medium-term economic concept—they just have a package of measures which could work for a period of three to five months, not more.

The second point is that no government in this country (not even the local governments) now has a proper democratic mandate. So if Volsky's group comes to power it would do so without a proper democratic mandate. So it would not be a legitimate government. It means that we could accept the existence of this government as a temporary or transitional structure. But then they would have to go to the polls and we need the elections to form the new Parliament and the new Parliament then could establish the legitimate government which is not there now.

SC: What is the procedure? When is the Presidential election due?

BK: The Presidential election is due in 1996 but Yeltsin will definitely not survive as long as that. But I think what is clear is that the Parliament was elected with different powers and different legislations than what we have now. Every structure of government was formed and elected under different laws and with different powers than what we have now.

SC: When was the Parliament elected?

BK: In 1990. So, it has completely lost all legitimacy. So we say: if Volsky wants to form a government okay let him do, but the only legitimate way to form a government is to dissolve the Parliament—and his government can be a caretaking one for three months or half-a-year—and call for new elections. By the way, they probably agree on that because that's one of the points we are going to negotiate with them. Our main condition of support to them—critical or distant support, any kind of support—is possible only if they from the very beginning promise officially that if they come to power within, say, three months they would have new elections. They have to fix up the election schedule.

SC: Is this the first condition?

BK: Yes. They must fix the schedule saying: if we form the government tomorrow then we would have the elections in February. If we form the government in February then we would have the elections in May—that is, some kind of schedule. Otherwise there would be no space for the democratic process in the country.

We have three conditions laid down by us and the Unions we support. The first is the condition of holding the elections and having the schedule for the elections. The second condition is that they have to stop and limit privatisation and even in certain specific cases certain industries and concerns have to be renationalised. Not every but certain industries. We are not going to push forward the whole of our programme at this stage.

SC: Which are the ones you would want to be renationalised?

BK: All the raw materials must come under public property. All the high tech too. If there are some new high tech industries in the private sector that's a different story. But the public sector high tech must remain public. Everything in transportation must remain public or be renationalised. And certain key enterprises in particular sectors that are hundred per cent monopolists like Rozselmarsh must be renationalised even if they have been privatised by the government. So we are not going to demand that all projects be in the public sector because first of all, that is unacceptable, and secondly, we don't want them to be bureaucratised like now. That's an element of long-term strategy.

But there are certain key industries or enterprises which have to be kept in the public sector if they have not yet been privatised or renationalised if they have already been privatised. So we are preparing a list of enterprises and industries that are to be kept public at whatever price.

There are certain elements in the Civic Union which say 'yes' to this demand and there are others which say 'no'. So we are going to negotiate and bargain on this.

SC: You have already had negotiations with them?

BK: I know Volsky for about two years now.

SC: You have had talks?

BK: Yes, of course.

SC: Have the talks been more or less successful?

BK: With Volsky it is easier to reach agreement than with some of the people around him.

SC: Like Rutskoi and others?

BK: Rutskoi is not a political figure. I mean Vladislavyev who is a top political person around Volsky. And there are lots of people to the Right of him. But, nevertheless, this could be pushed through.

SC. Just one question here. You said Gaidar is extremely cynical in his whole approach. What do you have to say about Volsky since you know him quite well?

BK: Volsky is less cynical. He is a very old-fashioned, kind of very traditional bureaucrat.

SC: Then what distinguishes him from the traditional Communists?

BK: What do you mean by traditional Communists? Because a guy like Volsky could be an old-style bourgeois in France or something like that. He is a very conservative person in terms of life-style and in terms of mentality which means that he is completely pro-capitalist, by the way.

SC: Was he a party apparatchik?

BK: Yes, for the whole of his life.

SC: What was he actually?

BK: He was the chief of the party's Industrial Department.

SC. In Gorbachev's time?

BK: Even before.

SC: A member of the CPSU Central Committee?

BK: Oh yes, a long-standing CC member.

The third condition is our anti-IMF international orientation which is very hard for the Civic Union to swallow. Because the irony of the situation is that whereas in the context of the conditions in Russia they (the Civic Union) are anti-IMF, in the global approach they are pro-IMF.

SC: Against the Third World as well?

BK: Yes, against the Third World too. So that is another point of difference: we are pro-Third World and they are anti-Third World. They view Russia as being a part of the North. Their problem with the IMF stems from the understanding that the IMF is not treating us properly—they are treating us as a part of the South whereas we have to be treated as a part of the North. They want to be a part of the North instead of supporting the South in its struggle against the North.

This is another point of division. So we are going to discuss this issue with them. But if they don't agree with us on this issue—on our attitude to the IMF—we are not going to support them.

SC: That is, if your policy on the IMF is not accepted by them you will not support them in forming the government?

BK No, I'll explain to you why. If they are going to be pro-IMF and if they are not going to have anti-IMF international alliances then they would be forced by the IMF to return to the Gaidar kind of economic strategy. They would not be in a position to find any international backing for any kind of dispute with the IMF. That will have its effect on our internal situation as well. Not because we matter so much in the internal sphere.

SC: That's very important. Sometime back, perhaps in August this year, there was an interview of Yeltsin carried in one of our journals where he had distinctly demarcated himself from the IMF position.

BK: Yes, but that was done in the wake of the first wave of anti-IMF feeling in the country. As a demagogue Yeltsin immediately realised what he had to do and he was just reflecting the popular mood in Russia. But, nevertheless, he carried out all the IMF-sponsored policies.

SC: Was it then just a populist ploy to pacify the people?

BK. Yes, I think so.

SC: When you speak of an anti-IMF programme do you think it at all possible to have any government in Russia without the backing of the United States?

BK. It is possible.

SC: I don't accept the view that the entire operation in the transformation of the former Soviet Union was masterminded by the Americans because that would be a very simplistic interpretation of whatever has happened here.

BK: Of course, that was not the case at all.

SC: But I get the feeling now that especially after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the Americans—particularly the Americans and not so much the Germans—have got a decisive say in the decision-making apparatus in not only Russia but also the other republics of the former USSR that are now new states. If that is the situation at the moment on what basis do you say that the Americans will not have the decisive voice to veto the removal of, say, the Gaidar Government?

BK: You see, there is a growing anti-Americanism among the people now.

SC: Can you elaborate on this, please?

BK: Just walk along the streets and you will find more and more anti-American graffitis on the walls, for example. Even in the city centre you find those graffitis. About a year or half-a-year ago, they would be immediately wiped out spontaneously by people who did not agree with them.

SC That is not happening now?

BK Not anymore.

SC What is the actual feeling among the people?

BK: The people were very pro-American a year ago. But not anymore. Because the Americans did everything to generate anti-American feelings around the country.

SC: Like? What did they do?

BK: Well, they appeared with dollars not respecting local habits, not respecting the way people really live and so on. They are rich and mostly very ignorant of the way of life of our people. They are also very arrogant.

SC What we find from afar is the total lack of self-respect of the Russian Government as far as the US is concerned. I don't want to equate the Russian people with the Russian Government.

BK: Well, the Russian people are not that bad. Of course, Russians are not noted for their self-respect.

SC. I don't agree with that at all. Russians, I am certain, possess a robust sense of self-respect. But it is the government which doesn't. At least that is what seems to us today.

BK: The point is that the Russian people feel: we were a superpower. Now nobody respects us anymore. People feel bad, feel awful about that. They don't want once again to be a superpower. But they want at least to be respected once again by the rest of the world. That's a growing feeling and that's one of the reasons for the increasing sense of anti-Americanism in the country today. Because the Americans behave like the winners and that is what the people do not want to swallow.

SC: Some Russians whom I met openly said: we behaved like prostitutes especially by voting for the Western move to disqualify Yugoslavia from the UN.

BK. Yes, that's one of the major issues on which such a strong feeling was roused among the people. In history, you see, the Serbians fought in all the wars on the side of Russia. In all the wars the Serbs and the Montenegrans fought on the side of the Russians or at least declared their support for the Russians from the seventeenth century onwards. For the Serbs, therefore, it is absolutely horrible that Russia today backs the Croats, the Muslims and the West against the Serbs, though there was a lot of violence from the side of the Croats, the Muslims and the West.

Let me give you another instance: in Bosnia in one of the Serb-controlled areas they needed more oxygen for a Child Clinic and the Muslims did not allow that to go through. So they asked the UN forces to get the transport carrying oxygen through. And the UN forces rejected it. As a result six children died. It was at Bainiluka. It became well-known inside Serbia. A leader of the Party of Labour went to Serbia, heard this story and on return to Moscow narrated this at a press conference here. But no paper reported this. People were just scandalised.

Well, of course, there was violence on both sides. But why are the sanctions against only one side?

SC: Even if you wanted to criticise Yugoslavia you could have done it without supporting the resolution disqualifying Yugoslavia from the UN.

BK: Precisely, it was done only to please the West.

I could give you another example. Russia was one the countries worst hit by the sanctions against Serbia. Because we lost most of the contracts. Russia was one of the main oil suppliers for Serbia gaining hard currency. It supplied weapons to the Yugoslav army. So we lost the contracts. The most scandalous case was that of the Galenica factory in Serbia. That factory produced medicines and the Russian Government bought from there medicines for the Russian population paying 40 million dollars and the money was already paid. The management of the Galenica factory said that it was going to send medicines for the Russian people as the money had already been paid. And the Russian Government rejected it saying that while the sanctions were in force we would not take the medicines from Yugoslavia. And the Russian people suffered. That was one of the most scandalous incidents. The Galenica management is still trying to persuade the Russian Government to take the medicines.

SC: Was the entire government involved or was it the handiwork of the Foreign Ministry?

BK: The Russian Foreign Ministry. But the rest of the government knew that, of course.

SC: What is the popular perception of such incidents? Is there any degree of resentment among the people?

BK: Of course, there is a lot of resentment among the people.

SC: But it is not yet being openly expressed?

BK: Well. it will be openly expressed in winter or during spring.

SC: And by all sections?

BK: Yes, including some of the middle strata people. In such a situation it will be very hard for the government to survive with these policies.

SC: Do you think that the Civic Union will not take such a position?

BK: No, it is going to be a little bit better. But it is not going to be pro-South or pro-Third World. And without being openly pro-Third World you cannot win in the competition with the IMF. Instead of being more critical of the IMF if they are going to be very soft that would be self-defeating. That is why we say that we cannot take your reforms or counter-reforms seriously unless you are serious in your confrontation with the IMF. If you are serious in your confrontation with the IMF then you have to take a pro-South position.

SC: Any such position would be sharply anti-American. Are they afraid of taking such a position because then the Americans would veto their coming to power?

BK: No, I think the problem is not that. The Americans couldn't veto their coming to power. They could come to power even if the Americans ten times veto that. That's because the Americans do not have that kind of a striking power as yet. This is not a banana republic where you can control everything. Even in Nicaragua the Americans could not veto the Sandinistas' coming to power. So that's not the case.

But the problem is that they have no moral courage and no social base for adopting such radical policies. So we say that our task in this situation is to try to push them further to the Left either by cooperating with them if we have an agreement or by approaching them. If they do not agree it is not necessary to fight against them directly but to quite openly attack them and mobilise people on these issues in order to try to put pressure on them.

SC: If this is the feeling among the people, both anti-American and anti-IMF, then it is a positive development on the whole.

BK: Of course.

SC: Then there is room for optimism, isn't it?

BK: Of course. Well, I am now much more optimistic. There is another point which is very important if you take into consideration the Western and international side of the crisis and that is that the West now is interested in preventing the restoration of the Union. It is clear that nobody wants restoration of the Union. It is clear that nobody wants restoration of the Union in its original form. But it is also quite clear that, for example, the Central Asian republics have their only chance to survive as real states if they form a federation of their own—a small Soviet Union for Central Asia.

SC: Should it be a federation or a confederation?

BK: It makes no difference if they form a real state with the same government, with the same currency and with the same army like India, let's say.

SC: That was expected at the Bishkek summit of the CIS. But it did not happen that way.

BK: That's because the West is vetoing that.

SC: And as far as the governments are concerned the West does have the capacity to do so, isn't it?

BK: Yes. So we want the new Union to be formed because the new Union means that we have to have an integrated army, an integrated foreign policy, the same currency all over the country, no internal borders, and of course we have to have the federal government or the confederal government like in Switzerland. Switzerland has all these things without which all talk of a new Union is just empty.

SC: Of course Ukraine will not join such a Union, will it?

BK: Well, you see, Kravchuk is not going to join such a Union. But who said that Kravchuk is going to survive this winter. Because in Ukraine there is a growing anti-Kravchuk feeling. There are three places where there is more pro-Union feeling than in Russia and these are Ukraine, Byelorussia and Kazakhstan. There you get more pro-Soviet Union nostalgia than in Russia because Russia is, nevertheless, still very big. As far as Ukraine is concerned there are more Ukrainians outside Ukraine than inside; so the separation of Ukraine from Russia is a tragedy for millions of ethnic Ukrainians much more than it is for the Russians. The Ukrainians are not only in Russia but they are also in the other republics; they are always discriminated against and while the Russian Government, at least symbolically, does something to protect its own Russian-speaking minorities (though it is mostly symbolic and the Russian Government is extremely weak on this issue), the Ukrainian Government doesn't do anything to protect the Ukrainians outside Ukraine. They are mostly protected by the Russian Government if it does anything at all. That is something which is very badly felt in Ukraine. And that is why in Ukraine—especially in the east and Kiev—you get a lot of pro-Union feeling even among the intelligentsia. Also with the Russian newspapers disappearing, the Russian TV not being taken any more—well, I think the Ukrainians do not really know Ukrainian, but they are Ukrainianised. It is very much similar to the case of the Ukrainian independence of 1918 when the nationalist Ukrainian Government collapsed because its nationalism was rejected by the local population which was mostly ethnically Ukrainian but rejected Ukrainian nationalism. In the countryside it is different but things are going to be decided by the people in the urban areas.

SC: But there is a fear of Russian nationalism-cum-imperialism in the Central Asian republics.

BK: I must tell you that as for the position of the Party of Labour, we are not in favour of the new Union incorporating all the republics of the ex-Soviet Union and probably the Central Asian republics, perhaps with the exception of Kazakhstan and Kirghizia, would do much better if they form a separate state based on a similar approach...

SC: A similar type of confederation?

BK: A similar type of but separate confederation.

SC: And what about another kind of confederation in the Caucasian republics?

BK: Well, that could be a very good idea but unfortunately they are now just killing each other.

But in Central Asia, you see, if the Russians are not involved that would be much better because there the Russians were colonisers. So it's better if the Russians are not involved. Though it looks very odd that if things somewhat go wrong they may invite the Russians. But anyway the Russians do not have any kind of moral right to mix into the local struggle the way they used to do because otherwise it would mean that if there is more Russian interference then there would be more colonial structures *de facto* reconstructed. It's something like saying: let's keep the British still in India because under the British there was still more order, or something like that which would be a wrong argument.

SC: Do you perceive that the Americans would fill the void which the Russians are leaving in Central Asia?

BK: No. They cannot.

SC: But in Kazakhstan they are trying to do so.

BK: Just wait a minute. To fill the void successfully you would have to move probably 300,000-400,000 Americans into the place. This they just cannot do. There is an infrastructure of Russian influence which cannot be replaced.

And in Kazakhstan it is a different story also because Kazakhstan is historically connected to Russia. The same thing with Kirghizia too although it is kind of different there. Kazakhstan is connected to Russia—at least some parts of it—for four or five hundred years, and also the Kazakhs fought together with the Russians in the Russian army in 1814 (in 1814 the Kazakhs and the Kalmyks were in the ranks of the Russian troops which took over Paris). So in that sense you don't expect them to be very much different from the Russians in terms of their history—I mean that part of the Russian historical experience. They are Muslims okay but there were always Muslims in Russia since the thirteenth century, they were also part of Russia—Tatars and all the others. Well, they were always somewhat discriminated against but they were part of the Russian—not ethnic—identity.

SC: But publicly they are all saying a lot of things against the Russian Government. I am speaking of the Kazakh Government here.

BK: But if you speak to the ordinary Kazakhs you will find that they are...

SC: Different?

BK: Yes. They feel that they belong to Russian history.

In Kirghizia it's different because Kirghizia is smaller, it was colonised only in the late nineteenth century and it was really colonised in a very brutal manner. In 1913 there was a real genocide of the Kirghiz people because they wanted to just eliminate the Kirghiz and move the Russian settlers in. One of the reasons why Kirghizia is different from Kazakhstan is because of their different historical experiences. Kazakhstan is connected to Russia for centuries and Kirghizia, which is ethnically not very different, the ethnic mix of Kirghizia is almost the same as in Kazakhstan, but it is a part of Kazakhstan which was conquered much later—about two centuries later—by the Russians. So that makes a great difference.

SC: One point I raised with a very senior Kazakh leader and a very sober person. I asked him: can you really call them colonisers? Was there any economic exploitation of Kazkhstan under Soviet rule? In that context what he referred to was the kind of genocide which was conducted, the artificial famines which were engineered...

BK: That was under Stalin and it was the same in Russia.

SC: Well, that is true but what he wanted to convey was the manner in which the Kazakhs were killed hurt their national and ethnic sentiments.

But this apart, that is, the repression in which both the Russians and the Kazakhs suffered and the Russians definitely suffered more than the Kazakhs, what he underscored was something else: the closing down of the Kazakh schools during the Brezhnev period.

BK: I disagree with this. I spoke to some Kazakh intellectuals, and they said that the closing down of the Kazakh schools was the response to the new demographical situation which dramatically changed in favour not only of the Russians but of the Russified Kazakhs. So the Kazakh population preferred to send their children to the Russian schools instead of sending their children to the Kazakh schools.

SC: So it was a natural process?

BK: Yes. And though there was a lot of pressure on the part of the Soviet Kazakh Government already in the seventies to keep the Kazakh schools going, still their number declined because of the reluctance of the Kazakhs to send their children to the Kazakh schools.

The nationalists among the Kazakhs may say that in 1968 we had so many Kazakh schools, in 1970 we had less and in 1980 we had even less. The question is: Why?

SC: I understand.

Let me refer to a very important recent development in Kazakhstan: the 200 billion dollar worth deal with Chevron, the US company, for oil exploitation.

BK: I think Chevron is the only exceptional case. The Americans do not have high stakes in Kazakhstan except for the Chevron.

SC: But because of the strategic location of Kazakhstan and the Chevron deal a lot of observers are saying that Kazakhstan may become an alternative source of energy for the Americans in case the Saudi Arabian Government is toppled and some other unforeseen events take place in the Gulf leading to some imbalance there. The Americans are swarming to Kazakhstan, a lot of their intelligence people are there. In this context I do not know of the people as such—though there is no visible sign of anti-Americanism among the people as of now—but the Kazakh Government seems to be more and more relying on the Americans as a counter to the Russian influence.

BK: But the government is less and less popular at the same time. And so, you see, the way the Americans back the government today that is the best means of becoming hated by the people.

SC: That's true. The more the Americans interact with the people the more would they become unpopular.

BK: I don't mean the people are necessarily against the Americans as human beings.

SC: No, no, that's not the point. The more the Americans interact with the people the more would the Americans become unpopular as has happened to them in Russia. Russians have now come to know how the Americans behave. Unless they change their entire temperament the Americans cannot but meet the same fate in Kazakhstan.

Now, you have spoken of the Third World and the growing anti-American feeling among the people. In that context, what is the position of the Party of Labour about developing more contacts with India?

BK: That's another point. Well, you see, if we are pro-South it means that we have to find the partners who could back us or at least cooperate with us in our attempt to become independent of the IMF. In this case the only potential partners are the economically strongest and traditionally more politically independent Third World or Southern countries. On the one hand, therefore, it is India, and on the other hand of course it is China. Whether you like the Chinese Communist Government or not it is another factor which is independent of Western control. So you have to cooperate with the biggest Third World countries in an attempt to get some kind of independence from the IMF.

SC: Although government-wise both the countries—India and China—are succumbing to IMF pressures.

BK: Well, but the situation could be changed inside India, China, Brazil or Mexico or Nigeria. I am just referring to the most important Third World countries. And the changes in Russia and an active Russian foreign policy could be a factor of positive change in the Third World if there is a real change at all.

The second point is that while the Indian Government is becoming more and more pro-US in many respects, at the same time we know that Indians and the Indian Government would like to have more cooperation with Russia. That would be an objective factor of more independence from the West.

SC: For both our countries?

BK: Yes, for both the countries. That is exactly why the Americans are so hostile to the cooperation between India and Russia. You are well aware of the US reaction to the Indo-Russian rocket deal. That is just one case. It happens anytime somebody here wants to have more cooperation with any Third World state of any real importance. The Americans always come out against it because they know that it makes Russia more independent from them and also the other partners more independent. So in that sense we have to encourage economic cooperation with a country like India and give a call "Look South" in terms of economic expansion. You see, our goods are bad for the Western market. Probably they are. But then they are so cheap that at least certain goods could well be acceptable in the Third World markets just for being so cheap. On the other hand, certain Third World goods are much better fit for our markets than for the Western markets.

So we have to look South if we have to think about consumer goods for the population, not luxury goods for the elite. Of course, for luxury goods one should better go to Paris. But if you want to get consumer goods for the great majority of the population cheap and get good economic partners then you would have to look South.

SC: I think more interaction between people like you and Indian intellectuals and political parties would be very useful, beneficial for both sides.

BK: Well, the problem is: how much do we count? For one thing, we are getting more and more support among the public opinion; on the other side, to a very limited extent from the political establishment of Russia, because the whole political establishment here is Right-wing and as far as the Left is concerned it is very marginal. But we do not care. Probably it's better to be marginal if the picture is like that. You see, the picture is quite awful. So we don't want to be part of this establishment.

But one of the reasons why we insist on the new elections also is because I am sure the new elections are going to show the new picture which is dramatically different in the balance of forces from the picture we now have in the Russian Parliament on the economic front. In this case there would be a definite shift to the Left. I don't want to say that there's going to be a triumph for the Left.

SC: Or a sweep.

BK: No, but I just mean that there would be a reasonable representation of the Left in terms of people and ideas...

SC: In Parliament?

BK: In Parliament and the society as a whole. Not just in Parliament, the Left strength is going to increase in civil society as such. Not kind of dramatically but it's going to increase. Almost everybody agrees on that. Even the observers who are hostile to us say that we have some chance of getting important positions if there are any elections or democratic procedures. Without the democratic procedures the Left is going to be marginalised. We thus have a chance of allying with forces which are definitely interested in promoting the democratic procedures. So in that sense the issue of democracy is very much becoming the issue of the Left.

SC: One small thing about the IMF: What is the indication of the anti-IMF feeling among the people?

BK: It's very easy for anyone to get spontaneous applause in a rally: you just have to blame the IMF for all the follies on the economic front and immediately the audience starts applauding. This is the scenario at least in Moscow.

An opinion poll survey by a very Right-wing Russian TV news programme, *Viesti,* conducted about a month ago showed that 67 per cent of the people surveyed were positive about socialism and 18 per cent were negative about socialism while 15 per cent were undecided. Since *Viesti* is very anti-socialist, this was most striking. And *Viesti* was very negative about the result of the survey, saying that the Russian people don't deserve freedom. But this too is a reflection of the public mind in Russia.■

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Indian Economic Crisis and New Economic Policy

KRIPA SHANKAR

The country has no doubt made significant progress in various fields in the post-independence period but taking into account the magnitude of the problem of poverty and unemployment the achievement cannot be said to be satisfactory. Despite tripling production of foodgrains the average per capita availability of foodgrains per day at 475 grams cannot be said to be satisfactory as the diet mainly consists of cereals. The per capita per day consumption of milk which is essential for persons of all ages is about 150 grams. The per capita consumption of cloth is round 17 metres and has remained constant over the years. It has been officially claimed that the population below poverty line has declined but the number of those living below the poverty line is formidable.

Agricultural labourer households constitute nearly one-fourth of the total households (23 per cent). They find employment for less than 180 days in a year and the wage rates are also very low as they are wholly unorganised. Besides, the farmers who employ them have also not much capacity to pay living wages in most of the cases as majority of holdings consist of marginal and small ones. Marginal holdings constitute 56 per cent of the total holdings and small holdings constitute another 16 per cent of the holdings. Thus more than 60 per cent of the cultivating households with one hectare of holdings cannot be said to be above poverty line as gross produce from an irrigated hectare may be at the most Rs 8000 to Rs 10,000 as per the Ministry of Agriculture (vide, *Indian Agriculture in Brief*, twentythird edition). The number of agricultural labourers and marginal and small farmers is constantly rising. The number of the former increased from 32 million in 1961 to 56 million in 1981 and marginal holdings increased from 45 million in 1976-77 to 50 million in 1980-81. This only shows the persistence of rural poverty and destitution.

Although the bulk of plan investment goes to industrial and service sectors and institutional credit similarly flows to these sectors, employment generation has been at a very low level. Employment in the organised private sector employing 10 or more persons was 70 lakhs in 1978. In 1989 it rose to 75 lakhs only. In other words, organised employment in the private sector is increasing by less than 50,000 annually while the labour force is increasing by 70 lakhs annually. In the public sector the picture is somewhat better where employment increased from 142 lakhs to 185 lakhs during the same period or annually by about four lakhs. The result has been that the bulk of the rising labour force has remained unemployed and underemployed thereby perpetuating poverty.

The growth in the per capita net product has been slightly more than the population growth and has almost doubled from Rs 1127 in 1950-51 to Rs 2142 in 1989-90 at constant prices (1980-81). Thus growth has been much less than what is desired and many other countries, notably China, have registered a much faster growth. The growth in national income has also been vitiated by the fact that growth in agricultural sector which supports 70 per cent of the population has been lower—almost half than the total national income growth. And a non-commodity producing sector like the service sector has recorded the fastest growth. The share of agriculture in the net national product has declined from 50 per cent in 1950-51 to 33 per cent in 1988-89 but the number of persons depending on agriculture has been constantly rising. Currently the per capita net product in the non-agricultural sector is nearly five times that of the agricultural sector and the disparity is widening with each passing year. In other words, the per capita income in rural areas is only about one-fifth of the per capita urban income. The result has been that people in large numbers are migrating from villages to towns.

The per capita income does not depict the inequality in incomes both in the rural and the urban sectors. There is vast inequality in the country..In rural areas the land owned by the top one per cent is equal to the land held by the bottom

The author is on the staff of the Govind Ballabh Pant Social Science Institute, Allahabad.

55 per cent of the land-owning households. In urban areas the disparity is all the more glaring. According to a study of National Council of Applied Economic Research, the top one per cent account for 14 per cent of the wealth in the country whereas the bottom 50 per cent account for only seven per cent of the wealth. The share of the bottom 10 per cent is only 0.1 per cent. In other words, the wealth of the top one per cent is more than the wealth of the bottom 65 per cent of the households. Such inequality is not to be found in any other country which professes democracy and socialism.

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THUS, the growth process has resulted in a distorted sharing of the gains which have accrued to a small minority of privileged section. This is mainly so because assets and resources are owned in a highly skewed manner; and, secondly, the financing of the Plans has been mainly done by deficit financing and borrowing, both internally and externally. The inflationary financing of government expenditure has led to windfall profits to the propertied classes while it has meant hardship for the common man. Greater reliance has been placed on indirect taxes which lead to price rise, than on direct taxes. Income tax ratio to non-agricultural Gross Domestic Product (GDP) declined from 2.2 per cent in 1974-75 to 1.5 per cent in 1987-88. The Seventh Plan document has observed, "...indirect taxes rose from 11.7 per cent of GDP at market prices in 1975-76 to 14.0 per cent in 1984-85 while direct taxes fell from 3.4 per cent to 2.3 per cent during the same period". Thinmaiah has noted that direct tax as a percentage of total tax revenue declined from 35 per cent in 1950-51 to 14.3 per cent in 1984-85 while indirect taxes as a percentage of GNP increased from 4.7 per cent to 16.9 per cent during the same period.

The inability to tax the income and consumption of the asset-owning classes has led the government to increased borrowings which, on the one hand, increased the debt burden to the government and on the other, has resulted in huge unearned income to those who lend, thus further accentuating inequality.

Internal liabilities of the Central Government increased from Rs 48,451 crores in 1980-81 to Rs 279,528 crores in 1990-91 or from 35.6 per cent of the GDP to 54.4 per cent. External debt increased from Rs 13,479 crores to Rs 66,017 crores during the same period. Gross interest payment of the Central Government increased from Rs 2604 crores in 1980-81 to Rs 21,850 crores in 1990-91 and further to Rs 32,000 crores in 1991-92. The interest payment is rising now by more than Rs 5000 crores per annum. Additional resource mobilisation by the Central Government was of the order of Rs 1790 crores through various taxes and Rs 1537 through revision of railway fare freight and postal and telecommunication tariff (vide, *Economic Survey 1990-91*, p. 106). It means that, by and large, the government repays the interest and debt obligations by still more borrowing. The annual borrowings of the Central Government is currently Rs 30,000 crores and the interest payment alone is higher than this amount. The revenue receipt is increasing annually by Rs 9000 crores hence increasing dependence on further borrowings.

If the government borrows strictly for meeting investment needs there can be little objection to it but borrowing to meet consumption expenditure and debt-servicing leads the country to a debt trap. The government resources are increasingly going to non-developmental heads which on the one hand effects the growth of the economy and on the other hand forces it to borrow even large amounts.

The non-development expenditure of the Central, State Governments, including Union Territories increased from Rs 30,564 crores in 1985-86 to Rs 68,198 crores in 1990-91. The interest payment of the Central Government alone almost doubled during the last four years. Subsidies have also contributed to the non-development expenditure which in the case of the Central Government increased from Rs 5451 crores in 1986-87 to Rs 10,487 crores in 1992-93 (BE). If the subsidies were meant to help the really poor there again could be little objection to it but these subsidies have gone to relatively better-off sections. Fertiliser subsidy of about Rs 5000 crores per annum is enjoyed by better-off farmers who are its bulk users and the food subsidy of Rs 2500 crores goes to urban population where incomes are much higher than rural incomes. The rural poor who should alone have been subsidised are completely out of its orbit.

The profligacy in non-development expenditure is visible more so as far as general services, that is, administration, pension, etc. is concerned. The expenditure on police on the part of the Central and State Governments, including Union Territories, increased from Rs 1163 crores in 1980-81 to Rs 5220 crores in 1990-91. The pension bill of the Central Government increased from Rs 629 crores in 1984-85 to Rs 2713 crores in 1992-93 (BE).

The salary bill of the Central Government is currently Rs 13,000 crores per annum and the same is rising by more than Rs 1200 crores annually. The total realisation from direct taxes is of the same order. The rising consumption expenditure eats into the capital formation out of the budgetary resources of the government which declined steeply from 40 per cent in 1984-85 to 31 per cent in 1990-91.

The inability to mobilise resources as also to cut down wasteful non-productive expenditure is also reflected in the Plan size which is wholly inadequate in view of the enormity of the problem of poverty. The average per capita Plan outlay comes to about Rs 800 annually and is not increasing in real terms.

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AN equally disconcerting fact is that whatever little is available for Plan investment does not take into account the natural resources and endowments of the country and the priorities which in the first instance can only mean provision of food, shelter, provision of employment for the vast under-employed and unemployed population, etc. Half of the country's population is not in a position to meet the bare cereal requirements necessary for the human organism and about two-thirds of the population is dependent on agriculture; yet agriculture accounts for only six per cent of the Plan outlay. This includes crop production, animal husbandry, forestry, fisheries and agricultural extension and education. Irrigation and flood control account for another 10 per cent of the total outlay which in percentage terms has declined over the years although about two-thirds of the agricultural area is still unirrigated. The Central Plan outlay on telecommunication is more than what has been provided for agriculture and rural development put together. On rural employment the Central Plan allocation is only four per cent of the Plan outlay and is one-third of what has been provided for petroleum. The allocation for space is four times of what has been provided for soil and water conservation; it is twice of what has been provided for dairy and fisheries. The Plan allocation for civil aviation is almost 60 per cent that of agriculture and allied activities.

It is also to be borne in mind that Plan spending is heavily staff-oriented where salary and establishment charges consume a significant portion of the outlay. An example may be cited. The total Plan outlay on agriculture and irrigation excluding rural development by Central, State Governments and Union Terrotories was more than Rs 6000 crores in 1987-88 but foodgrains production declined from 143 million tonnes in 1986-87 to 140 million tonnes in 1987-88. It only shows that not much goes to improve the productive base through Plan expenditure.

A very large part of the Plan outlay has gone to public sector enterprises but the results have not been commensurate with the quantum of investment. As these units have been operating in a wholly sheltered market there has been no attempt towards technology upgradation and cost reduction. Private sector units are also operating in the same scenario with the result that Indian exports are finding increasing competition and not even major devaluations of the Indian rupee have improved the balance of payment position. Indian foreign trade accounts for only 0.5 per cent of the world trade. In order to meet the rising consumption of the top 10 per cent of the population who have inordinately gained, imports of consumer intermediates have been freely allowed exacerbating the balance of payment problem. Imports rose from Rs 35,416 crores in 1989-90 to Rs 43,171 crores in 1990-91 while exports rose from Rs 27,681 crores to Rs 32,527 crores leading to a sharp deterioration in trade balance.

External aid also hardened and declined from Rs 13,070 crores in 1989-90 to Rs 6252 crores in 1990-91. Meanwhile, debt-servicing on foreign borrowing continued to move up. Debt-servicing charges increased from Rs 5861 crores in 1987-88 to Rs 9630 crores in 1990-91. In view of the deepening of the crisis and falling value of the Indian rupee, the NRI deposits were also withdrawn leading to a fall in external reserves.

The crisis that developed was the cumulative effect of the wrong policies which have been pursued over the last four decades. There were now two options before the government. One, to change these policies in a very determined manner which would have entailed a drastic redistribution of assets beginning with radical land reforms, a very drastic effort to mop up resources from the better-off sections, drastically cut the non-developmental expenses by abolishing subsidies enjoyed by the same section, reducing or at least putting a moratorium on salaries and allowances and cutting down all wasteful non-productive expenditure, etc. Obviously it would have meant a frontal attack on the top 10 per cent of the population—the big industrialists, traders, financiers, speculators, owners of black money, contractors, bureaucrats, professionals and the like.

The government being dominated and controlled by these very classes could not be expected to hit these classes. The other option was to give up all efforts at self-reliant development aimed at achieving growth with justice and allowing advanced countries to directly make investments in areas which they consider to be profitable. It may be mentioned that borrowings and even direct foreign investment are not undesirable provided the investment is according to the priorities of strengthening the productive base of the economy, more so in meeting the needs of the masses. But as the profit margin is lower in the wage goods sector private foreign investment goes in the luxury sector where there is a market on account of heavy concentration of wealth at the top. Foreign investment in India has been mainly in such sectors and the new economic policy that has been initiated gives a green signal to foreign companies to virtually take over the Indian economy if they so like. This is abject surrender and sounds the death knell of any progressive role that the ruling class in India might be expected to play.

The Indian bourgeoisie has its origin in the colonial economy perpetrated by the British. Their fight against foreign domination was not aimed at ending the colonial order as such. All it wanted was a greater space and having come to power and having consolidated its class rule it has now found that its interest lies not in confrontation with the erstwhile imperial countries but in coming to terms with them by allowing them to have the upper hand in the economy.

The new economic policy does not at all address the basic economic issues facing the country. All it aims is to invite foreign capital not according to our priorities but in areas where the foreign capital will have larger margins. Many other countries in Latin America have taken this route and have come to grief. The tragedy is that the ruling class in India has become such a decadent lot that it prefers servility to freedom only because it might get a few crumbs more. ■

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BANGLADESH ANNIVERSARY

Down Memory Lane

P.R. CHAKRAVERTI

December 16 marks the twentyfirst anniversary of Bangladesh's liberation. We are publishing the following article to mark the occasion
—Editor

It was on December 16, 1971 that independence was won by the newly-born Bangladesh.

The intellectuals of East the Pakistani—the writers, journalists, teachers, poets and artists—were mercilessly put to death by the Pakistani armed forces and their collaborators, mostly Urdu-speaking Muslims.

The brutality of the hordes, goaded by General Yahya Khan, Tikka Khan and Rao Farman Ali, was no less demoniac and sadistic than that of the fascist forces—the Nazis led by Hitler of Germany in World War II.

Six million Jews were poisoned and put to cruel end in the gas chambers.

Three million Bengalis, living in the eastern wing of Pakistan, were slaughtered indiscriminately —children, old men and women—certainly not combatants.

I met Indiraji at a critical turn of gruesome tragedy, blatantly demeaning humanity and the values that the citizens of the world cherish above the beastly ferocity of wild animals.

The conscientious and compassionate lady took the brave decision on her own and saved the helpless millions of East Pakistan by a unique demonstration of heroism and spiritual quest. She was fully conversant with the historic letters of Romain Rolland, addressed to Rabindranath: "In every country of the world, men like us are alone. Our home is the future; for we have built our nest on the Tree of Eternity. We can defy the winds and sing our melody serenely."

As one who has spent more than fortythree years in East Bengal, studying and teaching students and fighting for freedom, I told Indiraji that villainy and ruthlessness supervened honesty, decency and spiritual values in the eastern area of Pakistan—ruthless, dominated by the neo-imperialists of West Pakistan. In her proposed visit to the USA, UK and Europe, she was expected to interpret the beastly behaviour of the Pak leadership.

It was nothing strange that the developed world, enlightened and cultured, maintained studied silence and the records show to what extent the well-known world publications and media took the initiative in exposing the brutalities of the murderous forces of the Pakistani occupation army.

Keen students of history, specially the Bengalis, will come forward with the grim resolve to unravel the mystery: how was the dreamland of Jinnah, Nazimuddin, Liaquat Ali Khan and Surhwardy converted into a veritable sepulchre of all virtues that enabled humanity to thrive?

What about the Islamic tenets of morality and divine sense of justice, love and peace?

It was in 1934 that the communal award was gifted to the Indians fighting for liberation, by the benign British Government. A new tremor, a vivid pulsation of life made itself manifest in the community life of the Bengalis.

Schism and dissensions darkened the horizon and the Muslim leaders started spreading the venom of separatism amongst the unsophisticated Muslims, the Scheduled Castes and Tribes.

On my release from Hijli Special Jail, I returned to Dhaka and met our Congress colleagues, specially the freedom fighters, who suffered for direct participation in the satyagraha initiated by Gandhiji.

The Chairman of Dhaka Municipality, a leading lawyer—Birendranath Mazumdar—a co-prisoner with me in Dum Dum Special Jail in 1932, came to my residence with prominent office-bearers of the Dhaka District Congress, with the fervent request to organise the registered graduates of the University and help him to contest the University seat in the State Legislature.

I was informed that the topmost Muslim League leader—Sir K. Nazimuddin—was intent on contesting this seat. The electorate happened to be the registered graduates—both Hindu and Muslim.

Naturally, I accepted the challenge and went round a few districts of East Bengal, contacting the graduates and collecting application forms for

The author, an ex-MP, is a former Secretary of the AICC.

registration.

My classmate—Faizlr Rahman—came to me with Sultan Ahmed—the trusted lieutenant of Sir K. Nazimuddin and Nawab Bahadur Habibullah.

Fazlur Rahman was with me in the MA class in Economics and also Law. A young advocate, he had changed a lot sporting a Turkish Fez on his head and he spoke in a language that made me aghast and sorely unhappy.

I sensed something sinister and unholy. A new menace seemed to creep into our body politic.

How could we possibly maintain genuine interest in community life tainted as it was with communal vice?

The two stalwarts departed: I was depressed. Yet, I worked hard and collected forms for registration, duly signed by the Hindu graduates.

But soon the political climate took a new turn. I don't know if fate and omnipotent chance toyed with man.

Sir Nazimuddin responded to the challenge of Fazlul Haq, leader of the Krishak Praja Party, and decided to contest from Patuakhali, Barisal and lost.

It was a fresh turn for Fazlur Rahman to meet me again and I learnt that he was the Muslim League nominee for the Dhaka University seat. No Congressman was willing to contest from the University seat. The Congress leader, Birendra N. Mazumdar, contested from the Dhaka Urban seat.

I worked four months or so and hectic visits to a few districts gave me fresh knowledge about the dark spell of communal bickerings, fomented by the feudal nawabs, the landlords and their henchmen.

The Congress leadership adopted a role of passivity, seemingly impervious to the gathering storm, that left workers like us caught up in an impasse.

Communal bickerings slowly and imperceptibly assumed a character that could demolish all the moral prescriptions that sustained us from 1920-21, when Gandhiji laid special emphasis on truth, removal of the century-old vice of untouchability and fostering Hindu-Muslim unity.

◆

THE Dhaka University contest was no mild affair. Fazlur Rahman was helped by the wily League leadership and the efficient machinery brought into operation by the renowned "Ashan Manzil", the spacious and splendid Nawab Palace in the city itself.

My uncle, Dhiresh Chakraverti, contested the Rural seat against the most crafty Congress leader—a member of the Big Five—Kiran Shankar Ray, unsuccessfully.

My preoccupation with my uncle's contest forced me to leave the city. Fazlur Rahman won the seat by a small margin and smilingly told me, how he collected the ballot papers, duly signed and sealed by some non-Muslim graduates, registered ingenuously by me. My absence counted.

The elation was all-pervasive and the vain MLA, representing the University, was appointed the Chief Whip of the Muslim League party. This newly gained prominence made him arrogant all the more. But he and his cohrts failed to take into account the disastrous and dissolute forces that were appearing on the scene. Once the true motto of service was allowed to be submerged in clandestine self-aggrandisement and craze for power and pelf, the social life got contaminated and vitiated.

In 1940 I experienced the rudest shock of my life,' when a small Ford car, carrying me and the renowned historian, Dr R.C. Mazumdar, the Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University, was surrounded by a small batch of Muslim students—residents in Salimullah Hall, within a short distance of the Vice-Chancellors House, with angry slogans—*"Blood for Blood"*.

Awestruck for half a minute, I strongly urged on the Vice-Chancellor not to move from his seat and try to get down from the car. Fury and insensate restiveness had turned the agitated band of young boys wild and it was useless to argue with them.

I asked the Nepali driver—Bahadur—to turn the car swiftly back to the Vice-Chancellor's residence.

We learnt from the loud talks of the students that one Muslim student had been stabbed to death by an unknown assailant in front of the adjacent Jagannath Hall. It was the phone call of Prof Haridas Bhattacharya—the Provost—that brought us two out of the Vice-Chancellor's residence, in the small car.

It was undoubtedly an act of indiscretion on my part to persuade the Vice-Chancellor to leave his own car, guarded by armed police, and take his seat in the vehicle that brought me to his house.

Those were the days of virulent communal riots in Dhaka city. It was most sordid, heinous and suicidal for university students to rouse themselves to such frenzied feelings of hatred and murderous reprisals—*"Blood for Blood"*.

As a teacher in Feni College, Noakhali, and B.M. College, Barisal, I taught hundreds of Muslim

An Old Ghost's Grouse

I am taking a holiday from newspapers today and turning to books.

Books are edited, just as journals are. That is, the manuscript is prepared for the press. The first step in doing so is to clean up grammar and spelling and ensure uniformity. Then the facts, names and dates are to be checked. But the larger part of book editing consists of taking care of the argument and the sequence.

Often, without the author realising it, the manuscript contains some absurdity. The editor also lets it pass but the sharper kind of reader detects it and bursts out laughing.

One such example occurs in a biography of Ramananda Chatterjee, the great editor, which came out years ago but which I read recently:

> Under his (Jagdish Chandra Bose's) influence Ramananda developed a keen and abiding interest in scientific experiments and inventions. While a student he was married to Manorama Devi in December 1886.

Ramananda Chatterjee would not have let that pass.

H.Y.S.

students, including sons of feudal nawabs and rich zaminders.

They showed unreserved respect in classes and outside and often came to my residence for guidance and helpful suggestions.

In 1940 I was a teacher in Barisal College, the biggest college outside Calcutta.

Naturally, I felt immensely pained to observe the sordid signs of debased psychic metamorphosis, the virus of communalism seeking to corrode our nationalistic urges and aspirations. During World War II, I was detained as a security prisoner in the Barisal district Jail for a period of three years and Fazlul Haq, Minister of Education, discontinued the government grant to the College on that score.

To save the College from ruin, I resigned. After my release from jail, by the end of 1945, I came to Calcutta and met the Congress leaders. Sarat C. Bose, leader of the Congress Legislature Party in New Delhi, persuaded me to accompany him to the Capital and function as his Political Secretary.

I met Mahatma Gandhi in Bhangi Colony, New Delhi and told him frankly about my psychic reactions to the proposed partition of Bengal, the province with the largest population in the country.

I had my premonitions about the fate of seventyfive million of Muslims, if Bengal was divided into two.

The caste Hindus were sure to leave their hearths, homes and landed properties and the newly designated East Pakistan would be treated as the colony of West Pakistan.

Gandhiji advised me to meet Pandit Nehru. I had detailed talks about the new political developments and the most prominent leader placed me in a responsible position in the AICC headquarters, then stationed in Swaraj Bhavan, Allahabad.

It was shifted to New Delhi in 1948, and the saintly leader, Gandhiji, was no more.

I knew how he strove hard to convince Jinnah that the Congress and the Muslim League must work together in the task of building a new India once the 'Quit India' proposal was accepted by the British imperialists.

But his repeated meetings with Jinnah were not fruitful.

It was in September 1947 that Jinnah spoke in the Constituent Assembly of the newly born Pakistan:

> Now, if we want to make this great state of Pakistan happy and prosperous, we should fully concentrate on the well-being of the people and, specially, of the masses and the poor.
>
> If you change your past, and work in a new spirit, no matter which community you belong to, you will get equal rights and privileges.

It was obvious that Jinnah had abandoned his pet two-nation theory before his death due to leukaemia.

The avalanche of partition meant colossal suffering for the Muslims, left in the eastern sector—several thousands of miles away from the seat of power. Twentyfour years elapsed and it was on December 16, 1971 after the ignominious surrender of the proud Pakistani forces that Bangladesh was born with fresh fervour and fragrance, resplendent with a divine lustre.

We join the free citizens of Bangladesh in offering our warmest salutations for the martyrs—the intellectuals, the artists and engineers and three million kindred Bengalis—mercilessly slaughtered by the mercenaries and stooges of West Pakistan. ■

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BARREN RAY: Reflections on Ayodhya

(Continued from page 4)

To meet that situation with the forces of law and order alone would precisely be tantamount to rubbing the political beast the wrong way. Let us imagine the most extreme scenario: were the Central Government to forcibly prevent the arrival of the *kar sevaks* to Ayodhya a few weeks ago, had taken over the disputed area by the Rapid Action Force or the Army, and removed the UP Ministry by Article 356, and then in order to put a lid on the consequent turmoil had to declare a state of Emergency with the NF-LF supporting, the most likely result of all that would have been that the mass following of the *Hindutva* camp would have jumped up four-fold and the Central Government together with all its allies would have been brought to a position like that of the Congress Government before the 1977 elections. (Precisely such developments have taken place in so many Afro-Asian countries in the last few years.)

Advisedly, the Prime Minister did not attempt such a course and instead sought to defuse the near-the-brink confrontation by pushing through several rounds of negotiations which obliged the *Hindutva* camp too to declare that they would abide by a peaceful process and respect the judiciary. That they were either lying and deceiving all along or subsequently changed their plot cannot be the justification for blaming the Prime Minister. What was needed was a political process that would bring about an opposite swing in Hindu opinion, that would accept a reasonable and mutually acceptable compromise solution on the basis of give and take and not remain hell bent to "score a historic Hindu victory over the alien Muslim". This, above all, needed time and that was the Prime Minister's objective. For the same reasons the BJP camp sought to cut short the process and brought about their precipitate action. But the allround sense of shock and revulsion with which almost all sections of our people have reacted to this development is the single net gain out of this entire tragic development.

One must remember that the same punitive measure following the commission of a crime which is hailed by the people, had it been taken as a preventive measure before the act would have antagonised the people and lionised the would-be criminals as martyrs. This is a price one has to pay for running a democratic polity especially when the crime in question is mixed up with political frenzy and religious passion. There is a paradoxical law about democratic polity, political opinion swings against the side which is seen as acting unilaterally taking the precipitate step to forcibly change the existing balance.

After the agonising developments last Sunday (December 6), which were rightly characterised by so many as the Black Day of our time, the Central Government has come out with a four-point immediate programme: (1) rebuilding the mosque; (2) prohibiting the communalist organisations; (3) due punishment for all who committed legally cognisable offences including members of the bureaucracy for any derelection of duty; and (4) the question of constructing a Ram temple to be finalised after the Court's decisions are announced. These are very bold and most welcome decisions. They constitute items that would help the country move back to a position of sanity and peaceful coexistence on the basis of mutual respect.

But these are not easy to implement. They certainly cannot be implemented merely with governmental fiat and material means. Bureaucrats and policemen and contractors cannot implement them. *The Statesman* Editor, C.R. Irani, was the first to call for the rebuilding of the mosque and reminded us that had Mahatma Gandhi been faced with the problem he would have insisted upon the Hindus to carry it out. To implement all that, to undertake such a venture, nothing less than the concerted efforts of all the non-BJP parties together with the Central Government is called forth. A good beginning has been made by the Congress-I supporting the all-India *bandh* call given by the NF-LF combine. That the *bandh* on Tuesday still fell short of a total and absolute success would show that the task before the country is not easy. To swing the people back from fundamentalism towards secularism and an abiding national integration would require sustained long-term joint efforts by all the democratic and patriotic elements of our long-suffering and ancient land. ■

(December 8)

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